



marion brewman

first prize in nature contest

camp Ashfield 8/15/34



Johnnie—goat stood placidly behind Cricket, wagging his long beard socially.

CRICKET AND EUNICE

BY

ELIZABETH WESTYN TIMLOW

AUTHOR OF

"CRICKET: A STORY FOR LITTLE GIRLS"

"CRICKET AT THE SEASHORE"



THE WORLD SYNDICATE PUBLISHING CO.
CLEVELAND, O. NEW YORK, N. Y.

Copyright, MDCCCXCVII
BY ESTES AND LAURIAT

Printed in the United States of America
by
THE COMMERCIAL BOOKBINDING CO.
CLEVELAND, O.

TO
ELMA AND SYLVIA
AND
THE GOAT

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. TWO AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS	11
II. A DISCOVERY IN FILMS	25
III. A "MUMFUL" PARTY	37
IV. IN QUARANTINE	59
V. AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR	68
VI. A PHILANTHROPIC SCHEME	83
VII. MOSINA	99
VIII. A BEDFELLOW	110
IX. CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS	120
X. THE BOY	139
XI. A VISIT TO MOSINA	152
XII. KEEPING HOUSE	165
XIII. THE DIAMOND RING	187
XIV. SCHOOL THEATRICALS	211
XV. A DAY IN THE NURSERY	234
XVI. A GOAT EPISODE	253
XVII. A SCRAPE	268
XVIII. AN EXPEDITION	279
XIX. THE RESULT	292
XX. OLD MR. CHESTER	299
XXI. BREAKING UP	307

EUNICE AND CRICKET.

CHAPTER I.

TWO AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS.

Two eager heads bent over a small, square, black object that stood on the stone post at the foot of the doorsteps.

“‘Hold the camera steady and push the lever,’” read the brown-eyed girl with the long, dark braid, from the little pamphlet she held in her hand. “Look down in the little round hole, Cricket; you can see the picture perfectly. Isn’t it the *cutest* thing?”

Cricket squinted down critically.

“It’s going to be perfectly *jolly*,” she cried enthusiastically. “Now stand still as mice, children, while I count three.”

“Stand still as a mice, Helen,” immediately admonished the small girl in the dark red coat, giving a great pinch to the little golden-haired,

brown-clad lassie who stood beside her, by way of emphasising her older sister's words. "Stand still as a mice, Johnnie-goat," giving the third member of the group a tickle on the back that made him drop his curved horns for more.

"Keep still 'as a mice,' yourself," said Cricket, tapping Miss Red-coat briskly on the head. "All ready, Eunice. 'You push the button, and we'll do the rest,'" she quoted, clapping her hands in her favourite fashion. "Hooray! there she goes! Oh, I hope it will be good! That's all, Zaidie and Helen. You stood *beautifully*. Run along now. Can't you go around to the stable and take Johnnie-goat back, 'Liza?'"

Eunice swept the trio a low bow.

"Thank you, Mr. Johnnie-goat, for standing still so long," she said, addressing the horned member of the party. "I hope your picture will be *very* good," she added, picking up the camera with a highly professional air.

"Take me again," demanded Zaidie instantly, when Cricket told her once more that they were through with this wonderful process, and that they might go. "I like having my picture taken. Don't you, Helen? Let's sit on Johnnie-goat, and be taken again," and Zaidie tried

to climb upon the goat's white back. This, however, was a familiarity which Johnnie could not think of permitting, even from his best friends. He instantly sidled off, not wishing to hurt her feelings by a direct butt. Zaidie unexpectedly sat down on the ground.

"No, we don't want any more pictures of you now, thank you," said Eunice, examining her Kodak, while Zaidie demanded a view of the one already taken.

"She thinks it's like putting a penny in the slot and a picture drops out. This isn't that kind, my dear. There's a lot of hard, hard work before you see that picture," said Cricket importantly.

The day before had been Eunice's birthday, and this Kodak, which had been a long-desired possession, was a birthday present. As it was given to them entirely ready for use, they had literally nothing to do but "press the button."

Papa had been too busy that morning to explain the mysterious little affair very particularly, but he told the children to study the pamphlet carefully, and follow directions closely. Eunice and Cricket promptly sat down and read the pamphlet from title-page to *finis*.

Both looked a little blank when they had finished. *Could* they ever remember all those instructions?

"It's all *plain* enough," said Eunice meditatively, "but the question is, how are we going to remember it all at important times? Now, for instance, about the stops. Listen: 'Snapshots can only be made when the largest stop is in the lens.' Will you remember that, Cricket?"

"We might just sit down and learn the whole thing off by heart," suggested Cricket, wrinkling her forehead thoughtfully.

"Horrors, no!" returned Eunice. "Learn all that? Let's just carry the pamphlet around with us all the time. If we take the camera anywhere, we can certainly take the book, too. Now let's go and take a picture."

"It's easier to take them out doors, everybody says," answered Cricket, jumping up. "There's 'Liza starting out to walk with the twins. Let's go and take them sitting on the front door-steps."

The twins, of course, were perfectly delighted at the idea of having their pictures taken. Zaidie straightway sat herself down on the lowest step, with her hands firmly folded in her

lap, and her feet out straight before her, trying vainly to keep the smile out of her dimpled face.

"I don't want you that way," said Eunice, laughing, as she turned around. "You must get in some romantic attitude. No, I don't mean romantic, but picturesque."

"Couldn't I be sliding down the railing?" suggested Zaidie eagerly, thinking she saw a chance to indulge in her favourite amusement. "Wouldn't that be pick-chesk?"

"You can't slide down no railings, pick-chesk or no pick-chesk," put in Eliza, promptly.

"You couldn't, anyway," said Cricket, "because you have to sit still, Zaidie. You can't hop around when you have your picture taken. Don't you remember?"

"Zaidie, you stand up by the post," began Eunice, when Cricket interrupted her.

"Look! There's Johnnie-goat trotting up the street. Do let's have him in. He *would* be picturesque."

"S'pose he'd stand still?" asked Eunice doubtfully. "I don't want to spoil my picture."

Johnnie-goat was a very celebrated character in the neighbourhood. He belonged to a livery-

stable that was on the square back of the Wards. He was famous for eating off his rope and running away. He was a big white goat, with unusually long horns, and a very inquiring disposition. He was such a ridiculous fellow, too, sometimes munching sedately at a stray banana-skin or orange-peel, then kicking up his heels as if an invisible imp had tickled him, and walking off on his forefeet. He was a very discerning goat, also, and knew perfectly well his friends from his enemies. He had goodwill for the one, and butts for the other. One way that he knew his friends was that they always wore dresses, while his enemies were clad in trousers. That was one invariable mark. Then, his friends gave him apples to eat, and scratched the sensitive place between his horns that he couldn't possibly reach himself, and which, therefore, was seldom properly scratched. His enemies usually saluted him with stones, and offered him tin cans to eat. Now Johnnie-goat was perfectly willing to acknowledge that he *could* eat tin cans on occasions, but they were not his favourite diet, and he didn't care much for them. He regarded it as something of an insult to be constantly offered them. It

was one thing, if he chose occasionally to pick one up himself and see if he liked the brand, but he decidedly objected to having them so often forced on his attention.

The result of all this was, that Johnnie-goat's disposition was somewhat mixed. Like some people whom we have known, when he was good he was *very* good indeed, but when he was bad he was simply terrific. He seemed to know no middle course.

I do not know why he was not called Billy, in accordance with all traditions. His full title was John O'Rafferty, Esq., and on many occasions he got the whole benefit of it.

He was great friends with all the Ward children, who, from having so many pets of their own at Kayuna, had a special predilection for any stray animal. Johnnie-goat perfectly understood this fact—for any one who thinks that a goat is not a highly discriminating creature, is not acquainted with his peculiarities.

On this particular morning, Johnnie-goat was quite willing to be treated to some banana-skins, which the cook brought out to tempt him with. He fully realised that it was a very solemn occasion, for he stood like a sentinel, and only blinked once.

"We must take all sorts of things, Cricket," said Eunice, when the children had trooped away down the street, with Johnnie-goat marching sedately behind them, with now and then a sudden frisk of his hind legs in the air, and then such an instant return of his composure, that you doubted the evidence of your eyes.

"There are only a dozen pictures on one roll, you know, and we want a good variety. Aren't you just wild to develop them? I am. It sounds so grown-up to talk of the chemicals and the 'hypo.'"

"What is the 'hypo?'" asked Cricket, as they went down the street in search of a good subject.

"Why, just hypo, I suppose. I don't believe it's anything in particular," said Eunice vaguely.

"Donald said Marjorie had the hypo yesterday," said Cricket thoughtfully, "when she was sort of dumpy all day. But I suppose it isn't the same kind."

"No, of *course* not, goosie. The hypo is that white powder that comes with all the things. Didn't you notice it? Perhaps Donald meant that Marjorie had been taking some. Oh, look! wouldn't that corner of the little park make the *sweetest* picture? Let's take it!"

"Yes, let's! and that's two," added Cricket, when the picture was secured. "*Isn't* this exciting? Can't I take the next one, Eunice? Just let me look at the pamphlet a moment to see something."

Cricket buried herself in the book of instructions for a moment, then darted tragically at the camera.

"Oh, *Eunice!* See! the pamphlet says that after you take a picture, you must turn the key around three or four times, till the next number appears before the little window, and that will put a new film ready; and we never did it! What do you s'pose it will be?"

The two girls stared at each other in dismay.

"Oh, dear! dear!" exclaimed Eunice. "Then we've taken another picture right on top of Johnnie-goat and the twins, and they *were* so cunning!"

"There isn't any way to *untake* it, is there?" asked Cricket, in real Mrs. Peterkin fashion.

"I'm afraid not. I wonder what it *will* look like! It will be a composite photograph, I suppose, like Marjorie's class picture."

"Perhaps it won't be bad," said Cricket, the hopeful. "You see, this last picture is trees and

shrubbery, and there may be a glimpse of Johnnie-goat and the twins behind them. It may look as if we did it on purpose. I shouldn't wonder if it would be lovely. Perhaps we'll want to take more that way."

"Perhaps," assented Eunice, doubtfully. "It makes me think of Kenneth this morning. I was in mamma's room while you were practising, and Kenneth was there too. He brought a piece of paper to mamma and asked her to draw a man, and she drew the side face of one—and Kenneth asked her where the other side of his face was, and if it was on the other side of the paper. Mamma told him the other side of the face was there, but he couldn't see it; and then she turned him *her* side face to show him. Well, Kenneth took the paper and ran off, but came back in a moment with some straight lines across it, and told mamma that that was a kitty and a fence, and mamma said she saw the fence, but where was the kitten? And *what* do you think the baby said?—that the kitten was behind the fence! That it was really there, only she couldn't see it. *Wasn't* that cute?"

"He's just the dearest, smartest baby that ever was!" cried Cricket, always enthusiastical

over her beloved small brother. "We'll just tell people, then, that the children are behind the trees, even if they can't see them. There, now, I've turned the film ready, this time. See! there's the figure 2 in the little window at the back. Now, we are all ready. What shall we take?"

"Let's take each other," suggested Eunice. "I'll stand here by the park fence. Am I all right?"

The picture-taking went on merrily after that. They got a fine snap at papa just getting out of his buggy, and one of mamma, as she came home from market. They got another dear little picture of the twins as they came down the street hand in hand. It did not take long to use up all the films at this rate, and at luncheon they were able to announce, triumphantly, that they were ready to develop their pictures that afternoon.

"But you don't know how," objected papa; "and I have to be out all the afternoon and can't help you."

"Please let us try it by ourselves," pleaded Eunice. "We can read the directions, and they're *terribly* plain. A cat could use them. Do let us!"

"Better not do it alone, youngsters," advised Donald. "I'd show you, myself, if I were going to be home, but I can't wait."

Donald was in college this year, but, being so near, he often came home to lunch on Saturday, and sometimes spent Sunday there also.

"Of course we can do it," returned Cricket, confidently. "We've read the directions a million times already, and I pretty nearly know them by heart. Listen: 'Open one of the developer powders, then put the contents (two chemicals) into the beaker and fill it up to the brim with water. Stir, till dissolved, with wooden stirring spoon. Next take—'"

"Spare us," begged Marjorie. "We're willing to take your knowledge for granted."

"We can use the linen closet for a dark room," said Eunice.

"By no manner of means," put in mamma, promptly. "I don't fancy having every sheet and pillow-case I own deluged with chemicals. You can have the bathroom closet, though, if you'll promise to put everything you take out of it back very carefully. But children, I decidedly think you should wait for papa or Don to show you how."

"Do let them, mamma," advised Marjorie. "Of course they will make a frightful mess, and ruin the whole roll, but they will have the experience."

"The idea!" cried Eunice, much injured. "We've done everything right thus far—or almost right," with a sudden, guilty recollection of the double exposure of the first film.

"*Almost everything!*" laughed Donald. "Considering you only have to aim the thing and press the button, it would be strange if you hadn't. Did you aim the wrong end of it and try to take something out of the little back window?"

"Of course we didn't," said Eunice and Cricket, in an indignant breath. Then they exchanged guilty, conscious glances.

"We'll promise about the closet," said Eunice hastily, to prevent further inconvenient questions. "We'll take the things out carefully; and may we take the little nursery table to lay our trays on? It's just large enough to fit."

These matters being settled, the two girls, as soon as luncheon was over, eagerly began their preparations. They had a free field, for mamma and Marjorie had gone to a *matinée*, and

Eliza had taken the children to the park for the afternoon. The housemaid's closet in the bathroom was soon cleared of its brooms and dust-pans, and the small, low table from the nursery was brought in. The little trays that came with the outfit, the bottles of chemicals and "hypo" were duly arranged on it.

"There!" said Eunice, surveying the preparations with a professional eye. "Everything is ready, I *think*. Let me see," consulting the pamphlet. "'Also provide a pair of shears, a pitcher of cold water, and a dark room having a shelf or table'—yes, all here. Trays, stirring rod, chemicals, and when we shut the door we have our dark room—why, *Cricket!*" with a sudden exclamation of dismay.

CHAPTER II.

A DISCOVERY IN FILMS.

EUNICE'S exclamation was caused by the fact that when she suited the action to the word, and shut the door, they were, of course, in total darkness.

"I should say so," returned Cricket, blankly. "Not being cats, we can't see in 'Gyptian darkness. Do open the door. We'll have to get a lamp."

"No, we mustn't," answered Eunice, opening the door, and consulting the pamphlet. "It says, 'neither daylight nor lamplight.' It ought to be a red light, like this one in the picture."

Although the children did not know it, such a lamp had come with the outfit, but when Donald unpacked the things he had left it in his own room.

"We might get a lantern from the kitchen," went on Eunice, "and wrap it with a red cloth.

That will do. Will you go for the lantern while I get the red cloth?"

Cricket flew off, and returned in two minutes with the lantern.

"Cook says," she announced, breathlessly, "that if we put anything over it, we must be careful not to cover up the breathing-holes at the top."

"Isn't this fine for the cover!" said Eunice, displaying a small turkey-red laundry-bag. Its contents lay on the floor under the table.

"*Now*, we're all ready," announced Eunice once more, with much satisfaction. "What do we do first?—where's the book?" when the lantern was carefully covered, with a due regard for the breathing-holes.

"The book? why it's — I *do* believe we left it in mamma's room. No, here it is. And — goodness gracious! Cricket, we've forgotten to take the roll of pictures out of the camera!"

"Aren't we lunatics?" exclaimed Cricket, with her bubbling laugh, as she threw open the door. "How do we get the things out, anyway? Everything is so *tight*," she added, turning it upside down. "I can't see where anything comes out. Where *does* it come to pieces?"

"I'll read the directions. 'No dark room is required to take out the spool of films, but you must take your position as far from the window as possible.' So glad we needn't stay in this dark closet to do it! Read the directions very slowly, Cricket, and I'll do the things."

"All ready," said Cricket. "'Unclose the catch at the bottom, holding the camera *taut*.' What in the world is *taut*?"

Eunice knit her brows.

"Can't imagine, unless it means carefully," she said, thoughtfully.

"Shan't run any risks," cried Cricket, jumping up and flying away. "I'll look it up in the dictionary."

She came back in a moment, looking rather disgusted.

"It only means 'tight,' 'firmly.' Why in creation didn't they say so?"

Fortunately, the remaining directions were sufficiently simple, and in a few minutes the roll of exposures was in Eunice's hand. The children went back into the closet, to make ready the chemicals.

The careful measuring and mixing of the powder with the required amount of water went on.

The trays were arranged in due order, and Eunice announced, for the third time :

“Everything is positively ready now, so we can begin to cut apart the pictures,” taking up the roll of thick, black paper. “How can we tell where to cut them? Oh, here are little white lines on the back. Can you see to cut, Cricket?”

“Yes. What’s all this white stuff between for? It looks like paraffin paper something, only it smells like fury.”

“It’s just to keep the other paper from rubbing when it’s rolled over the spool,” said Eunice, sniffing at the paper, which, you all know, was really the film, on which the picture had been taken. “I should say it *does* smell. Throw it on the floor after you have cut off the black pieces.”

“Here’s one,” said Cricket. “Oh, I’m so excited, Eunice. Listen: ‘Put it in the water, *edge* down, to prevent air bubbles.’”

“Done,” said Eunice. “Next.”

Cricket read on under the dim red light, till she came to “In about one minute the film will begin to darken in spots.”

“There, we have not any watch,” interrupted

Eunice. "Cut out and get the nursery clock, Cricket. Cover the roll all up, because you know the *leastest* bit of light will spoil it."

Cricket obediently "cut out," and then resumed her reading.

"'The films will begin to darken in spots, representing the lights.' Isn't that the *funniest*! how can black paper darken in spots, I'd like to know?"

"Can't imagine; but I know that chemicals make things do all sorts of queer things," answered Eunice, lucidly. "Cut some more to be soaking while these go into the developer."

"That first one's been in more than a minute. Hold it up, Eunice, and let's see it darken in spots. It hasn't changed a bit, yet," she added, disgustedly, after a moment. "Isn't this waiting going to be slow work?"

The waiting did prove tiresome. Again and again the children took the thick, black squares of carbon paper from their bath in the developer, eagerly scanning the opaque substance, which naturally showed no trace of change.

Five — ten — fifteen minutes ticked slowly away.

"Goodness gracious me!" groaned Eunice at

last. "I should think we had been here for five hours. Isn't this poky?"

"This black paper can *never* darken," cried Cricket, despairingly. "There's some mistake. If it was that white lining paper there would be some sense."

There was a moment's pause, and then both girls exclaimed, in a breath:

"Eunice!"

"Cricket!"

"We've gone and —"

"Soaked the *wrong thing*!"

"We've soaked the *carbon paper* —"

"And thrown away the *film*!"

"Of course that white paraffiny-looking paper was the film!"

"Of course this thick stuff is the carbon paper to wrap around the other and keep out the light."

"Aren't we *geeses*?"

"We just are! Don't let's *ever* tell. Now, where are the films?"

"Just dropped around anywhere," said Cricket, dolefully.

"Scrabble around carefully, and we'll find them. Oh! aren't we the *idioticest* girls?"

"We'll have to mix some more developer, and change the water in the first tray, too. It's all black, for the colour in that old carbon paper leaked out. Have you found all the films?"

"I had only cut six, and here they are. I'll cover them up while you open the door and fix some more developer."

At last, everything was under way again.

"Four o'clock," said Eunice, soberly, "and to think that we haven't developed a single one yet!"

"But, oh, see!" cried Cricket, joyfully, holding up the film, after a moment. "It really is beginning to darken in spots. Hooray! See, Eunice, that actually looks like an arm sticking out there! What is it, do you suppose?"

"I don't know. Looks like a ghost's arm, doesn't it? Put it to soak again. Let's look at this one."

"Nothing here. Eunice, what makes all these scratches across it?"

"Probably we stepped on them. You know you threw them down any way. Probably the scratches won't show through. Oh, I do believe this is mamma! Isn't that her bonnet that begins to show?"

"Yes — no — I think it's the one where we tried to take that runaway horse. Seems to me that looks like a leg down there."

It was a curious effect to watch the films as they eagerly held one after another up, for the different parts came out in a ghostly, unattached way. Here one lonely-looking leg was plainly to be seen. Then a head, and again a branch of a tree or an arm.

"But look at this one," cried Cricket, surveying one in deep disgust. "Isn't this the small-poxiest-looking thing?"

It was pretty liberally sprinkled with dark spots, but one of them was unmistakably Johnnie-goat's head and horns.

"This must be the one we took on top of Johnnie-goat and the twins, shouldn't you think? I do believe it is them — it is they — which is right?"

"I do believe it is," answered Eunice, ignoring the grammatical appeal. "It's spotty enough to be anything. It's certainly like Kenneth and his cat, for I can see Johnnie-goat behind the trees."

"So we can. Look at this one, Cricket. What we thought was mamma's bonnet or a

runaway horse isn't either. You held it upside down. See! it's this one where papa was getting out of his buggy. What we thought was mamma's bonnet is papa's foot. I guess they are ready for the last tray now. Go on with the directions."

Long after five o'clock, two very sober and tired-looking children emerged from the bathroom closet, and proceeded to set things to rights.

"Do you know," said Eunice, breaking a long silence as they cleared trays and wiped off the table, "the book says it only costs five cents apiece to get the things developed at a photographer's. Don't you *really* think it would be worth while to save up our money for a time and have some done? Of *course* we could learn to do it all right after a time, but —"

"Yes," broke in Cricket emphatically, "I do. I don't vote to stay in every Saturday afternoon and develop smallpox pictures, with smelly old chemicals and nasty, sticky films, and put my eyes out with red calico lamps. This picture of papa is the only single one that is going to be half-way decent; and the horse looks more like the ghost of a rhinoceros than anything else.

That post sticks up by his nose just like a horn."

"Cricket, don't let's *ever* tell that we soaked the carbon paper and thought it was the film that the pictures were taken on," said Eunice, scrubbing with much soap and energy at the dull yellow stains on her hands that stubbornly grew brighter, instead of fading. "We'd never hear the last of it; and we *were* geeses," she added thoughtfully.

"*Indeed*, I'll never tell," returned Cricket with emphasis. "Papa and Donald would tease us out of our boots."

But at dinner-time there were many inquiries concerning the success of the amateur photography.

"It was a little tiresome," confessed Eunice. "Marjorie, was the *matinée* good?"

"Yes, very. How many pictures did you develop?"

"Only one really good one. Papa, don't you think you could drive us out to Kayuna next Saturday?"

"Yes, if it's pleasant. So only one picture developed?"

"Oh, they all *developed*," put in Cricket,

"only we couldn't always tell exactly what they were meant for. Marjorie, wasn't May Chester at the matinée? I thought I saw her going."

"But we want to know about the pictures," persisted papa, much amused at the children's fencing. "When will the gallery be opened? The twins said you took them with Johnnie-goat."

"Yes, we did, and it would have been fine, only we took another picture on top of it," said Cricket, regretfully. "We should have turned the little key around every time we took a new picture, but we didn't, and they got a little mixed up."

"We took some trees on top of Johnnie-goat," broke in Eunice, "and we hoped that it would look as if he and the children were behind them. Really, I think that would be a pretty good plan, any way, if they would only develop right."

"So they didn't, eh?"

"Papa, you needn't tease us. Developing pictures isn't a bit of fun, and I'm not going to do it any more," burst out Cricket desperately. "It isn't right to take money from the photographers anyway, for it's their business, and they lose so much if we do it ourselves."

"I think so, too," chimed in Eunice. "We staid in all this lovely Saturday, shut up in a hot, smelly closet, and wasted a lot of stuff, and got our hands all stained, and spoiled a whole lot of films."

"But had your experience," put in papa. "Experience is a hard school, but wise men learn in no other way. How's that, my Lady Jane? And now about Kayuna on Saturday," he went on, kindly changing the subject.

"Cricket, don't *ever* tell about the film," whispered Eunice as they left the table. "Don't ever tell *any* one."

And they never have told but one person, and she has never told till just now. Don't *you* tell, will you?

CHAPTER III.

A "MUMPFUL" PARTY.

CERTAIN dainty blue billets were causing a wild flutter of excitement among the ranks of Miss Lyon's school, for every girl in "our set" received one of the fascinating things.

"Miss Emily Drayton requests the pleasure of —" How deliciously grown up! Emily's parties were always simply perfect. Emily did not go to school with the others, for she was a delicate little girl, and had her lessons with a governess at home. Her friends rather envied her at times, since she had short hours and not half the Latin and arithmetic to do that they did, and an entire holiday whenever she did not feel quite well; but, in her turn, Emily often looked wistfully at the others, and longed with all her heart for the dear delights of school life. She always felt "out of it" when her little friends laughed and chattered and compared notes over school doings that she knew nothing

of. They would kindly explain the jokes and references, but when she did not know dear Miss Bates and cross Miss Raymond and slipshod Susie Dane and stupid Jessie Moore, the things that the girls laughed over till their sides ached did not seem very funny to her. It made her rather a lonely little girl, and, for this reason, her mother was always getting up some simple little party or company for her, and having Emily's friends to luncheon.

But this special party was to be a particularly fine affair, for it was not only Emily's birthday, but Hallowe'en as well, which double event Mrs. Drayton always celebrated more elaborately than any other.

Such an excitement among the children, then, when the blue notes began to circulate! Such jabbering at recess, such comparing of notes, such arrangements for going, such questions about each other's dress! Alas! the party was a whole week off. Could breakfast, and luncheon, and dinner, and going to bed and getting up, and school and lessons, ever fill up this long stretch between?

"I suppose there are new gowns for this important occasion," said Donald, who had strolled

in to dinner, one night. The family were all in the back parlour.

"No," said mamma. "Their organdies are fresh and nice, fortunately, and new sashes are all they need."

"Fortunately! Unfortunately, I say," said Donald, teasingly. "I was going to bring Cricket a dress of porcelain," referring to a joke of last summer, when Cricket had arrayed a heroine in flowing robes of white porcelain.

Cricket coloured, but answered serenely, as usual :

"If I was a gréat big boy, eighteen years old, and a Freshman, too, I'd be ashamed of an old chestnut joke like that. I described to auntie what I meant, and she said I meant chiffon — that gauzy, filmy stuff, you know."

"*Filmy* stuff would be appropriate," murmured Marjorie. "With a sash of black carbon ribbon you would be very swell."

"This family is absolutely disgusting," said Eunice, looking aggrieved. "Mamma, I should think you would be ashamed of such perfectly impolite, teasy children as Donald and Marjorie."

"I 'xpect God picked out the bestest children

he had around then," piped up Zaidie, who always put her oar in.

"Indeed, he didn't," said Cricket emphatically. "The good ones were all gone, and mamma was in a hurry, and He just sent any He had on hand."

"Good for you, Cricket!" cried Eunice approvingly, thumping her sister on the back. "Now, Mr. Donald, who has come out the little end of the horn?"

"Eunice, your slang is simply disgusting. Of course, we men talk it, but girls should never think of it."

"Hark, oh, hark, to the lordly Freshman!" chanted Eunice, clasping her hands and rolling up her eyes.

"Notice everything he says, Eunice, so we'll know how to behave when we go to college, and are dear, cunning little Freshmen," chimed in Cricket.

"No more words of wisdom to-night," announced Donald, getting up. "I'm off."

"The supply exhausted so soon?" murmured Marjorie, beginning a new corner in her embroidery.

Donald kissed his mother, ignoring Marjorie.

"I'll order you a Dresden China gown, my Lady Jane," he said, twisting Cricket's brown curls as he passed her.

On the eventful Tuesday morning, Cricket awoke bright and early — or rather, I should say, early but by no means bright. She had had a most unpleasant dream of having exchanged heads with an elephant, and her neck was, consequently, so much larger, that she could not fasten her collar around it. Eunice suggested they should make a new collar of the sail of the *Gentle Jane*, which she said would be just large enough. That seemed a good suggestion, but as they went to get it, they saw the *Gentle Jane* being taken out to sea by some playful seals.

"Dear! dear!" said Cricket in her dreams. "Now I'll have to go to the party without anything around my neck, because there isn't anything else big enough to make a collar of, and my throat is getting bigger all the time." Just then she awoke, clutching her neck. Sure enough, it did feel queer, and was very stiff on one side. She swallowed, experimentally.

"I don't like that pretty well," she announced to herself as the result of her attempt. "I won-

der if I have the lumbago in my throat, — and to-night is Emily's party! I *won't* have a sore throat. I never did in my life before, and I won't begin to-night — provoking old thing!"

She swallowed vigorously several times, and winked back the tears.

"There! that didn't hurt much. Wonder if it's swollen." She hopped out of bed quickly, and ran to the glass. She opened the neck of her night-dress and examined her round, white throat critically. It certainly was a trifle larger on one side, and was sore, as she pressed it a little.

"Oh, my patience, if it should be lumbago!" she groaned tragically. She hadn't the faintest idea what lumbago is, but the name sounded to her as if it might be something that could come in the throat. "Wonder how long it would take lumbago to come on. I *won't* have it begin till after to-night, anyway. How queer my head feels! I guess I'll look inside my throat."

Cricket turned quickly to draw up the shade, that she might see better what inroads the "lumbago" had already made. The quick movement made her aching head dizzy. She stumbled forward, tripped over her long night-

dress, and sat down, hitting the water pitcher which she had left the night before standing by the washstand. Over went the pitcher, and out came a deluge of water, almost setting bewildered Cricket afloat, as she lay huddled up on the floor.

"Cricket, what an awful racket you're making," said Eunice sleepily, from her bed. "Don't get up yet. It isn't time. It isn't light enough."

"Don't get up? Do you think I'm going to lie here and *drown*?" asked Cricket indignantly, getting rather weakly on her feet. "I've knocked over the water pitcher." She pulled the towels off the rack, and began mopping up the flood that crawled in every direction. "I'm wet through to my bones, I do believe, and there isn't a dry inch in my night-dress."

"Put on another one, and get on your bedroom slippers. Don't hop around there another minute with your bare feet," ordered Eunice, sleepily, but sensibly.

Cricket mopped dejectedly. "The water tipped straight into my slippers. There! That will do till Jane gets at it. Ugh! my feet are as cold as chopsticks. I'll change my night-

dress, and then I'm going to get into bed with you, Eunice, and get warm."

By breakfast time, Cricket felt very queer indeed. At any other time her mother would have noticed her lack of appetite and flushed cheeks; but just now it was, of course, put down to the excitement of the coming event. Her throat was stiffer than ever. She managed to slip down a little oatmeal, but the other things hurt too much to attempt.

"I *won't* have lumbago in my throat till after this party," Cricket repeated grimly, to herself, as she went up-stairs to get ready for school. "Only — I do wish the party was last night, and I could go into mamma's room and lie down all day, instead of going to school. My throat gets sweller and sweller. Do you suppose it could swell up so that I couldn't eat anything, and would starve to death?"

At this cheerful thought, Cricket groaned so deep a groan that Eunice looked around in amazement.

"Was that you, Cricket? Did you hurt yourself?"

"No, I was only thinking. Do you know those irregular French verbs? Aren't they awful?"

"I should think they were. They are enough to make a cow groan. Ready? Come on. Why, aren't you ready?"

Cricket swallowed an unhappy lump in her throat, and winked back a tear. How her throat did hurt, and how her head ached!

"I'm not quite ready. I didn't have 'Liza brush my hair out, and it's all full of bones, as Zaidie says. Upsetting that water pitcher, and mopping it up, took up so much time. There! that must do. Where are my books? Oh, here. I'm ready. Come on," and Cricket ran out first, lest Eunice should see her face.

The keen, fresh air seemed to do her head good, and by the time she reached school, she felt a little better. All the girls were chattering so hard about the party that night, that, for the time being, Cricket forgot her throat.

Under any other circumstances her manner and appearance would have attracted notice and comment. But it must be confessed that from a school point of view, the day was a general failure, and among the many flushed faces, hers passed unnoticed. She was sometimes languid and dull, and then excited and inattentive, making all kinds of queer blunders. She finally dis-

tinguished herself by announcing in her history class that Tecumseh, the Indian chief, died of a severe attack of lumbago, exclaiming as he fell, "Don't give up the ship."

"Really, Jean, it is fortunate that parties do not come every day," said her long-suffering teacher, rather surprised that it should be Cricket who said this, for the child's quick memory rarely failed her. Cricket sat scarlet and mortified, and did not recover even when that stupid Mary Blair wrote on the board in the grammar class, "Troy was concord by the Greasians."

However, the day slipped away. By dinner-time, her throat felt as if a good-sized potato had taken up its residence there. Her head ached and her bones ached, and down in one corner of her heart she began to wish that some one would say positively that she could not go to the party.

Meantime, after luncheon Eunice had begun to feel heavy-headed and stiff-necked herself. Like Cricket, she carefully concealed the fact, and resolutely put on a bright face and a very "smily" smile, if any one looked in her direction. Each child was so absorbed in conceal-

ing her own feelings that neither noticed the other.

At dinner, both being rather exhausted by such unusual exertions, they were so silent that papa asked them finally whether this was the night they were going to Emily Drayton's party, or the night they were going to be hanged. He himself had forgotten, he said, and he couldn't tell by their faces.

"They have been going to this party every day and night for a week," said mamma, looking rather anxiously at each flushed face. "No wonder they are all tired out beforehand. I had them both lie down for an hour this afternoon, also. My chickens, you *must* eat a little more dinner than that, if you *are* excited."

"I positively *can't*, mamma," said Cricket, feeling every moment that the tears *would* come if she forced another morsel past that awful lump, that now felt the size of a watermelon to her. Eunice resolutely choked down another bit of mashed potato.

"I'm too excited," she remarked, with a great assumption of cheerfulness. "Mamma, will you excuse Cricket and me, and let us go up-

stairs now? I don't want any dessert, do you, Cricket?"

Cricket jumped up briskly.

"No, indeed. Please 'scuse us, mamma," and equally glad to escape, the two children flew up-stairs. Each began to make conversation as they dressed. Eliza was there, waiting to help them.

"Lawks, how hot your face is!" said Eliza, her hand touching Cricket's cheek, as she brushed the brown curls till the gold light in them shone out.

"It's excitement," said Eunice. "Mine's hot, too; just feel. Ouch!" with an undignified exclamation, as Eliza's hand touched the lower part of her cheek rather heavily.

Cricket suddenly flashed a quick glance at her.

"Eunice," she said hastily, as Eliza left the room for a moment, "does your throat feel queer?"

"Yes. How do you know?" answered Eunice, surprised.

"'Cause mine does, awfully. It has all day. And my head aches."

"So does mine!"

"And I'm so hot —"

"So am I."

"And I feel so queer all over."

"So do I. What *can* be the matter? It can't be the party!"

"A party we haven't been to can't make us sick. No; I'm afraid we're going to have the lumbago in our throats, and I think *that's* something dreadful."

"Lumbago? It sounds dreadful. Why, I never heard of it. What is it?"

"Oh, I've heard of it. I heard papa telling mamma that May Chester's grandmother had it, and you know how sick *she's* been this fall."

"This lump in my throat is bad enough for anything," sighed Eunice, putting her hand to it. "But let's stand it till the party is over, Cricket."

"*I'll* stick it out," said Cricket, with grim determination.

Mamma came in just here and put the finishing touches to the dainty dresses, and then they went down to the back parlour to exhibit themselves in all their bravery to papa and Marjorie.

Donald sauntered in as they were being duly admired.

"Hollo, kids! What giddy-looking girls!

I am proud of you. Be sure and be good girls. Don't forget to 'open your eyes and look very wise, although you feel very silly.'"

"But we *don't* feel very silly," returned Eunice with dignity. "*We're* not Freshmen in college."

"Been polishing your wits for the party, I see. Good plan, my Lady Greasewrister, and Madame Van Twister, your ladyship's sister."

"You always did call us names, and I s'pose you always will," said Cricket tolerantly. "But it amuses you, and we don't care—do we, Eunice? Isn't it time to go, mamma?"

"Yes, the carriage is waiting. Put on my cloak for me, Donald. Thank you, dear. All ready, my little maids."

It was some distance to Emily Drayton's, and during the drive the children were so silent that mamma was a little worried. So little excitement of this kind was allowed them, that generally they were as merry as grigs.

"What is the matter, girls? I never saw such sober little faces bound for a party. Is anything wrong?"

Cricket longed to confess that her throat felt like a boiled pudding, that the skin of her neck

was queer and stretched, that the lights danced confusedly before her eyes, and that she wanted to turn around, go home, and go to bed. However, since she had borne it all day, she did not exactly like to sacrifice so much resolution, and giving Eunice's hand a tight squeeze, she said:

"No, it's nothing much; only a joke we're going to tell you after the party."

"A joke," said mamma suspiciously. "Hadn't you better tell me now?"

"No, really," said Cricket earnestly. "It doesn't have anything to do with anybody but ourselves, truly, mamma," quite believing her words.

"I don't like jokes that make you look so sober, my chickens. Cricket, are you very warm, dear? Your cheeks are so red that they are almost purple."

"It's warm in the carriage. Don't you think so?" struck in Eunice. And then mamma, to take up their minds, began to talk brightly about some funny occurrence that she had seen that morning while she was marketing, and the children almost forgot their respective woes.

When they arrived at the Drayton's, most of the children were already there. The lovely

house presented a gay scene. Emily greeted Eunice and Cricket rapturously.

"I was so afraid that something had happened, and you weren't coming," she said. "We are just going to play 'Quack,' and Cricket is always so funny in that. Come over here."

The classic game of "Quack" was started. All of you know it, do you not? A large circle is formed, and one person, blindfolded, stands in the middle with a cane in her hand. The circle moves slowly around till the person in the centre thumps the cane as a signal to stop, and then it is pointed at some one. This person takes the other end of the cane, and the blindfolded one asks any question, which must be answered by the word "Quack," uttered in a disguised voice. The one in the centre must guess the speaker, and is allowed three questions.

Cricket was always in demand for the centre, because her quick wits supplied her with funny questions. To-night, however, she rather lost her reputation, for her tired little brain could concoct nothing more original than, "What is your name?" "Do you like butter?" and all the other stupid questions that everybody asked.

One game succeeded another, but somehow nothing went very briskly. Presently Mrs. Drayton drew Mrs. Ward aside, anxiously.

"What is the matter with these children? It is so hard to get them started at anything. They don't seem to be having a good time."

"I've noticed something wrong," said Mrs. Ward, looking about her. "I never knew it so before, especially at this house. I've been watching my own two pretty closely, and something is certainly wrong."

"See!" said Mrs. Drayton "that is the eighth child that has dropped out of that game, and it is so with everything we have started."

"There is something in the air," Mrs. Ward said to her friend. "And look! there is Cricket actually sitting all alone behind that palm, with her head in her hand. I asked her a few minutes ago what is the matter, but she insists there is nothing. Why not hasten supper?"

"That's always a good suggestion," answered Mrs. Drayton. "Will you set them to playing 'Going to Jerusalem,' then they will be all ready to march out. Mrs. Fleming will play for them."

Even "Going to Jerusalem" was not a brilliant success. Most of the children marched rather listlessly around, dropping into chairs when the music stopped, without the usual scramble. Many of the little faces were flushed a dark red, and eyes were heavy-lidded. The announcement of supper was a relief, but Mrs. Drayton's quick eyes noticed, to her perplexity, that many of the dainty dishes were passed by untouched, and that on many a plate the luscious creams and ices were scarcely tasted.

Directly after supper Cricket sought Eunice.

"Eunice, I can't stand it any longer. The party is most out, and I *must* tell mamma that I have lumbago in my throat. If I don't, it may get so bad it can't be mended. I mean cured. Do you mind *very* much if I ask mamma to take us home? The party isn't half as nice as I thought it was going to be."

"I don't mind a bit," said Eunice, with an unexpected readiness. "I feel too queer for anything. Do you suppose it's something awful we've got, Cricket?"

"I don't know. I feel as if I were two persons plastered together. There's so much

of me. My eyes are pulled sideways down to my ears. I feel so queer and big," finished Cricket, dolefully.

So a few minutes later Mrs. Ward heard a dilapidated little voice behind her:

"Mamma dear, we're ready to go home whenever you are."

Mamma was absolutely paralysed by this unexpected remark.

"Cricket! is it you? What is the matter, dear? Are you ill?"

"No-o. At least I think not. But — well — my head aches a little and my throat is stiff and hot, and my eyes are leaky and I'm sort of dizzy, and —"

"My darling child! your throat is sore? Why didn't you tell me before? Where's Eunice? We will go immediately. Find Eunice, and both of you slip away to the dressing-room without speaking to any one. I'll say good-by for you to Emily and Mrs. Drayton."

"Eunice is ready, mamma. She feels queer, too."

Mrs. Ward's heart, mother-like, jumped into her mouth. Cricket's description of her feelings might mean any one of so many things! How-

ever, she kept a calm face, and hastened to explain matters to Mrs. Drayton.

“Do you know, I almost believe that all the children are coming down with something,” said Mrs. Drayton, anxiously. “That would account for their all being so heavy and dull, and hard to amuse. Poor little Emily is in despair. She has looked forward to this so long !”

The next day, seventeen of the children who had been at the party were down with the mumps.

CHAPTER IV.

IN QUARANTINE.

“So it’s only the mumps!” sighed Cricket, with much relief, after papa’s visit to their respective bedsides the next morning. “Papa, do you know I was *dreadfully* afraid that I had lumbago in my throat all day yesterday, when it was all swelly-feeling and hurt so to swallow. That would have killed me, wouldn’t it?”

Papa laughed hard.

“It might be a serious matter if you had it in your throat, but you are in no more danger of its getting there than you are of having toothache in your toes, my Lady Jane. Will you take a look at yourself this morning?” and papa held up a hand mirror.

All resemblance to Cricket had totally disappeared from the swollen-faced little maid on the bed, and the child stared in blank astonishment.

“Is that *me*?” she gasped.

“It is you, grammar and all,” laughed papa,

turning to Eunice, who lay in her cot on the other side of the room. "Admire each other to your heart's content, for you are just alike, my blooming little beauties."

"It's bad enough to be sick without being such frights," said Eunice dolefully. "Cricket, you look so funny. I want to laugh at you all the time, and I can't laugh for my face is so stiff that I can't seem to manage it."

"I've been wanting to laugh at you ever since we woke up, but I didn't want to hurt your feelings," said Cricket, politely. "I didn't know I looked just as worse."

"You look 'just as worsen,' if anything, little Lindley Murray," said papa, rising to go.

"But I don't feel so *very* sick to-day, excepting my head. Couldn't I get up by-and-by, papa? My legs feel so kicky."

"Yes, you may get up, but don't leave this room, remember. Here comes mamma now. Have you given Eliza directions about the children, dear?"

"Yes, she will keep them on the nursery floor. So these two can get up? That's nice. Mumps may not be very comfortable, my chickens, but it is nothing dangerous, if you don't

take cold. Think of you two going to the party last night in that condition !”

“I guess it was the mumpfulest party there ever was,” said Cricket musingly. “I don’t believe there was a single unmumpful child there. Good-by papa ; be sure and stop and see if Emily has the mumps — and if she hasn’t, I’ll send her some.”

“It might be a good plan to have an auction sale of them,” laughed papa, as he left the room.

The day was a long and weary one, and in spite of mamma’s company and of many amusements, Eunice and Cricket were glad to creep back into bed again early in the afternoon. Cricket was much the sicker of the two children, for she had taken a little cold from her unexpected plunge the morning before.

Just before dinner Donald came in, and went directly to his father’s office.

“Father, I feel confoundedly queer,” he said. “I wish you’d give me something. My throat is thick and I can scarcely swallow, and I’ve a splitting headache, and a toothache around my entire jaw. Please patch me up, for I have to go to a society meeting to-night.”

Doctor Ward lay back in his office-chair

and looked up at his tall son with a quizzical smile.

"H'm ! lumbago in your throat too, eh ? Sit down here, old boy, and let me have a look at you."

Donald sat down, while his father asked him a question or two. Then Doctor Ward burst out laughing. Donald looked injured.

"I presume it is nothing serious then," he said, with so precisely the same air of dignity that the younger children often assumed when he teased them, that his father laughed harder.

"It's serious or not, as you take it," he said. "For my part, I think it's decidedly serious. My dear fellow, you have the mumps."

Donald jumped about two feet.

"Mumps !" he ejaculated. "That baby-disease at my age ! Great Cæsar's ghost ! how the fellows will guy me !" He dropped down in a chair, with his feet straight out in front of him — a comical picture of despair.

"It was considerate of you to come home to have them," said Doctor Ward comfortingly. "Eunice and Cricket are just down with them. We'll quarantine you all together, and then you can amuse each other."

"The kids, too?" groaned Donald. "See here! Did they give 'em to me? I'll wallop them!"

Doctor Ward laughed harder.

"I don't know where they came from, yet. I've had twenty cases to-day. Most of the children at the Drayton party are down. 'A mumpful affair,' as Cricket says. *You* may have picked them up on the street-cars. You could not have gotten them from our children."

"Then I'll stay home till the confounded things are over," said Donald, rising. "I suppose I mustn't go to dinner? Are the kidlets down? No? Well, I'll go to my room and stay there. Since Eunice and Cricket are next door to it, that's all right. Is mother with the kids? I'll look in on them."

So, just as mamma was cudgelling her distracted brain for more stories to tell her two forlorn children, a knock was heard at the door, and Donald's curly head poked itself in.

"Hollo, Lady Greasewrister, and Madame Van Twister, her ladyship's sister! How are your noble mumpships?"

"Go 'way, Don," called Cricket dolefully. "We're all mumpy in here. You'll get them."

But Donald boldly advanced. "Your humble servant, Madame Van Twister. Your gracious majesty was pleased to smile on me last night, and your native generosity shares even your ailments with me. Behold, thy servant also is mumpy."

"You, too, Donald," shrieked Eunice delightedly. "Oh, don't make me laugh," holding her hands to her throat. "Isn't it funny, mamma? I didn't know *Freshmen* ever had mumps and things."

"Are you going to stay here with us, Don, really?" said Cricket interestedly.

"Yes, Miss Scricket, I am. Any objections? That is, in my cell next door. And as we are jointly quarantined from the rest of the family, I foresee we'll have some high old times. Oh, how they'll wish they had the mumps!"

"Poor boy!" said Mrs. Ward, sympathetically. "What a nuisance for you!"

For a week the mumps held high carnival at the Ward's. Imagine, if you can, the effect of all those swollen faces in a group. If Eunice and Cricket looked funny, they were nothing to lordly Donald, whose face was extended to the funniest possible proportions, for he had the affliction only on one side.

"We've a regular fat man's picnic," said Cricket the day that Zaidie joined the up-stairs party. For by the usual law of contraries, Zaidie, who was always strong and well, succumbed after two days, and delicate little Helen, as well as Kenneth, entirely escaped.

After Zaidie was promoted to the third floor, the original occupants had all the delights of a bear-garden. It was fortunate for her long-suffering family that Zaidie was seldom ill, for she was the hardest possible child to take care of when she was. When she was well, she was sunny-tempered, like the rest. She was harder now than she would have been otherwise, for really the poor little thing was dismally homesick for her little twin, her other self, from whom she had scarcely ever been separated an hour in her life.

After two days of Zaidie's confinement upstairs, Eunice and Cricket were in such a state of exasperation and excitement over the poor little thing's constant wailing and fretting for Helen, her refusing to be comforted or amused, that it was plain she must have a room to herself. Marjorie was detailed to look after her especially.

Marjorie, it fortunately chanced, had had the mumps when she was small. Moreover, Zaidie was passionately attached to this eldest sister of hers. When the little twins were born, Marjorie, aged nine, had eagerly begged that, since mamma had two babies now, she might have one of these to "call hers." Mamma let her choose, and her selection instantly fell upon the big, black-eyed baby, which appealed to her childish heart much more than the tiny, violet-eyed one, that was so delicate that for a year it was scarcely out of its mother's or its nurse's arms.

Marjorie had always petted Zaidie after that, and made much of her and called her "her baby," and the strong-willed little maid obeyed Marjorie better than any one but her father and mother. Marjorie delighted in her, because she was such a fine, noble-looking child, with her erect, firmly-knit little figure, her short, silky black hair, her great, dark eyes, and peachy complexion. She loved to take her to walk, for strangers would turn and look after her, or perhaps stop and ask whose child she was.

Helen, with her dainty beauty, her fluffy golden hair, and tiny figure, was not nearly so

striking-looking, though, after all, her caressing, lovable little ways made her rather the family pet and baby, even more than Kenneth, with his sturdy boy-ways. It is very apt to be the case, however, in a large family, that each one of the older ones takes a younger one under his or her special charge. Thus, as Marjorie had adopted Zaidie, Eunice laid claim to Helen as her baby. In this same way, Cricket felt that Kenneth was her particular property.

Therefore, it came about that Marjorie was quite willing to undertake Zaidie's amusement, but she soon discovered that a "mummy" Zaidie tried her resources to the uttermost. Mamma was with her also, all she could be, but with the other girls needing her also, and with Helen down with an unusually bad attack of the croup and fretting for Zaidie quite as much as her little twin did for her, poor mamma said that she needed to be three people, in order to satisfy all the demands upon her. Donald, in spite of his own mumps, came bravely to the rescue, but Zaidie managed to keep them all busy.

CHAPTER V.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

ON the fourth day of imprisonment, Doctor Ward came up after luncheon and carried mamma, somewhat against her will, off for a drive, as she had not been out of the house for a breath of fresh air since the Drayton party. Marjorie was left in charge. Zaidie, just in the state where she wanted whoever she didn't happen to have with her, wailed disconsolately, as she stood at the window watching her father and mother drive off.

"I want something to 'muse me with, Margie. Mamma's gone and I can't — see — Helen, and I hasn't anything — to 'muse me — with," she sobbed, flattening her nose against the window pane.

"You ungrateful little wretch," said Donald, trying to make a face at her, but not succeeding in twisting his features much more than they were already. "Here are two people devoting

their days and nights to keeping your highness serene — though I must say that I prefer to be paid according to my efforts rather than my success."

"If we were paid according to our success, we wouldn't go to Europe on the proceeds," sighed Marjorie. "See, Zaidie, there's Johnnie-goat trotting down the street — I do believe his tail has grown a little longer. Don't you think so?"

Zaidie dried one eye and peered out. Instantly she conceived an idea.

"I want to see Johnnie-goat. I hasn't seen him for seventy-ten years, Marjorie. I want him to come up here and see me."

"You can see him out of the window, pet. He couldn't come up here — goats don't know anything about houses, you know."

Zaidie instantly shrieked. Three days of immediate obedience to her demands had spoiled her.

"I want him! I want him! My throat's hurted me drefful, an' I want Johnnie-goat. I want him — up — here!"

"Great Scott, Zaidie! stop howling. Let's have him up, Meg. Anything for a diversion."

“But, *Don!* the goat up *here?* We can’t.”

“In the bright lexicon of youth, there’s no such word as ‘can’t.’ I’ll whistle down the speaking-tube to Sarah to entice him into the area, and I’ll go down and bring him up somehow. He can’t do any harm, and if it quiets the kidlet for a moment, it’s worth trying. Hollo, there, Sarah!”

Sarah responded, and the order was given. Zaidie stopped sniffing, and watched the proceedings eagerly from the window.

Sarah — much amazed, but too well trained to question any order of Master Don’s, however peculiar — ran out to induce Johnnie-goat, by every blandishment in her power, to enter the basement door. But wary Johnnie-goat, much more accustomed to being driven away from doors by the application of broom-sticks than being politely entreated to enter, suspected treachery, and backed off, moving his lowered head from side to side.

The whole “mumpy” tribe eagerly watched the manœuvres from above. Sarah would approach him with an indifferent, abstracted air, as if she didn’t see him at all, and then would suddenly make a grasp at his horns. Johnnie-goat would

stand with an equally abstracted gaze as she came nearer; then, at the last instant, up would go his heels skittishly, and off he would go, to a convenient distance, and again await Sarah's approach. She displayed banana-skins temptingly, and drew him, by means of them, almost to the area door, when the same performance would be repeated. All the time she kept up an uncomplimentary tirade under her breath, mingled with her enticing words to him.

"Come, Johnnie! Johnnie! good Johnnie! Oh, yer dirty blackguard! yer wretched spalpeen, you! It's a clubbin' with a big shillaly I'd be after givin' you! Come here, yer good goaty! Come and see the purty little gal what's waitin' fur ye! Oh, the capers! takin' that son-of-a-gun up-stairs! You murtherin' wretch, I'd drown yer fur a cint! Come here, good old goaty! come to Sarah! Ach, murther, howly saints! git yer evil eye off me!" as Johnnie suddenly reared and waltzed around on his hind legs, in a way peculiar to goats, presenting a low-bent head threateningly in her direction.

"Get hold of him now, Sarah," shouted Donald, throwing up the window for a moment. "He won't really hurt you. Grab his horns!"

Here Marjorie slammed down the window indignantly. Sarah, quaking with terror, but feeling she must obey Mr. Donald though the heavens fell, made a desperate rush and really grabbed the threatening horns with a heavy hand. She was big and strong, and as soon as she actually touched him, her Irish blood was up for a scrimmage. Even Johnnie-goat, to his own intense surprise and indignation, was as wax in her hands. Tucking his head well under her arm, by main strength she dragged him along, protesting with all his legs, to the area-door. By that time Johnnie had recovered his presence of mind, and then ensued a tremendous racket that brought the waitress to the rescue.

Johnnie-goat, of course, was filled with amazement at these strange proceedings, and his shrill "ba-a's" went all over the house. Sarah and Jane dragged him, struggling fiercely, along the basement hall to the stairs. Then Sarah, getting him by his wrathful horns, and Jane pushing from behind, wherever she could get hold, puffing and panting, they propelled bewildered Johnnie-goat remorselessly up the stairway, his sharp little hoofs beating a strongly rebellious

tattoo as he went, bleating like a whole ranch of goats.

Over the stair-railing, on the upper floor, hung five eager faces, each of the older ones calling out different suggestions, while Zaidie, her mumps all forgotten, shrieked hoarse applause to them all. As Eliza was out with Helen and Kenneth, they missed all this exciting time.

Arriving on the second floor, panting Sarah was obliged to sit down on the stairs to rest. She threw her apron over Johnnie-goat's head, thereby reducing him to a still wilder state of amazement, and hugged his neck tightly under her arm to keep him quiet.

"Hould on to his hinder-legs, Jane," she directed, and Jane immediately got hold of each wildly kicking hind leg. As Johnnie-goat was obliged to use his fore legs to stand on, he was, for the first time in his life, reduced to a condition of ignominious surrender. His vociferous cries filled the house.

The children, up-stairs, were in shrieks of laughter. Sarah looked as grimly determined as if she were attacking a tramp. She strongly disapproved of the whole proceeding, but, as is

often the case with the servants in a large household of children, she was absolute devotion to the whole tribe, and if they had ordered it, would have attempted to walk up the side of the house. Jane was doubled up with laughter, and with difficulty held on to her end of the captive. Sarah kept up a running comment.

"Be still, you slathery spalpeen; stop kickin' me. Ye've kicked me till the futs uv me is black till the knee, I'll be bound. Rest yerself the while; nobody's going to hurt yer. Come, then, if yer wants to go, we'll be off wid yer now. Take another h'ist, Jane. Shure, Masther Don, its hopin' ye've got a rope up there I am, else its tearin' yez all to pieces he'll be."

"Come on," shouted Donald, boyishly; "bring on your plunder. I've got a trunk-strap to fasten him with." Donald dived into the trunk-room, and reappeared with a long strap.

"Oh, my goodness, how he wiggles!" cried Zaidie, clapping her hands ecstatically, as the procession started up-stairs again. "Johnnie-goat! Johnnie-goat! keep still, and let Sarah carry you, there's a good goatie!"

And thus, pushed and pulled, Johnnie-goat, bewildered and indignant, was delivered into

Donald's hands, and the hot and panting maids returned down-stairs.

Donald fastened the long strap to his collar, and then to the balustrade. Being released from durance vile — that is, from his enforced retreat under Sarah's strong arm,—he shook himself vigorously, and then straightway executed a war-dance, first on his hind legs and then on his fore legs, and then, apparently, on one at a time, alternating the performance with a succession of dives and butts that sent the children shrieking and laughing in all directions out of his way.

"Oh, my throat!" sighed Cricket, wiping the tears from her eyes. "I've certainly split my mumps! *Don't* make me laugh so, Johnnie-goat. Don't you know your friends?"

Apparently Johnnie didn't, for he instantly butted fiercely in Cricket's direction.

"I do b'lieve he's hungry," said Zaidie, hospitably offering him a newspaper. In the midst of his wrath, Johnnie-goat recognised this familiar object, and, after eying it a moment, he suddenly dropped his warlike demeanour, accepted the paper as a peace-offering, and fell to chewing as placidly as if he stood on his

native heath — that is, the livery stableman's back yard. Under the calming influence of this familiar occupation, he soon dropped every appearance of resentment, and finally ducked his head in his usual friendly fashion, to let Zaidie scratch him between the horns.

One of Johnnie-goat's accomplishments was jumping over a rope held a foot from the ground. Cricket now proposed to make him do it, as the hall was long enough to give him a good run for it. As they did not dare to let him go entirely, Donald tied a long, stout cord to each side of his collar, so that somebody could drive him and jump the rope with him. Of course that somebody was Cricket. When the reins were ready, and Cricket had them well in hand, Donald unfastened the trunk-strap, and Eunice and Zaidie each held an end of it in place, so that Johnnie-goat could jump over it.

He knew the programme perfectly well, and stood quietly while the arrangements were being made.

"All ready," cried Donald, as much a boy at heart as ever, in spite of his eighteen years and his Freshman dignity. "Let him go, Gallagher!"

"Get up, sir!" cried Cricket, shaking her string reins. Johnnie-goat stood provokingly still, gazing abstractedly out of the window.

"Get up, sir," repeated Cricket, giving him a gentle push in the rear with her foot.

The touch gave Johnnie-goat the excuse he had been waiting for. He gave one of his sudden darts, dragging the strings from Cricket's hand, and was free. He pranced forward, escaping Donald's hands, knocked down Zaidie, who promptly howled, and dashed into Eunice's room. There he encountered a small table, the contents of which were instantly strewed over the floor, while the children ran screaming after him.

"My work-basket!" shrieked Eunice, darting forward to rescue it, as Johnnie-goat stopped, with one foot through the pretty straw cover, and nibbled inquisitively at a tape measure. He kicked out behind and butted in front when the children tried to catch him, and then turned his attention to a little silver-topped emery.

"Oh, Don! do get it!" cried Eunice, clasping her hands tragically, as the emery went into the capacious mouth, and Johnnie-goat medi-

tatively rolled it over with his tongue, to get its full flavour.

Don deftly seized Johnnie-goat's horns with one hand, and bent back his head with the other, pulling at the silk cord that drooped gracefully out from his mouth — thus rescuing the emery from its Jonah-like retreat.

“Oh! oh!” wailed Eunice, taking the wet and dirty object daintily by thumb and finger, “it's all spoiled! You bad Johnnie-goat! Box his ears, Don. Look out, Cricket, there he goes at your new shoes. Do get him down stairs now. Ow! there goes my Dresden pin-tray!” with a shriek of despair. Johnnie-goat, whisking from side to side of the room, in search of new excitement, had swept his bearded chin over the low dressing-table, among the array of pin-cushions, trays, bottles, photographs, and brushes. Smash went the dainty Dresden pin-tray on the floor as Eunice spoke, and Johnnie-goat danced off.

“Come, you young bull in a china shop, we've had enough of you,” said Donald, diving after him, and catching him by whatever was nearest. It happened to be his tail, which was a short but firm handle. Johnnie-goat whipped

around indignantly, and Donald grabbed at his horns.

“Whistle down the tube for Sarah to take him, Meg,” he called. “No, stop; I’ll take him down myself, the kids are out of the way. Come this way, young chap,” and Donald pulled and hauled Johnnie, vigorously rebelling, to the top of the staircase. As Johnnie looked down to the floor below, possibly he regarded the stairs as some curious kind of mountains, which his inherited instinct made familiar, for he suddenly plunged headlong down them so fast that Donald lost his balance, and went heels-over-head after him, goat and Freshman arriving at the bottom at the same moment, in an inextricably mixed-up condition. Overhead the excited girls watched and screamed.

Donald unwound his long length slowly. He and the goat had mutually broken each other’s fall, and nearly each other’s necks. As it happened, neither was hurt. At least, Donald discovered that he was not, and as for Johnnie-goat, he seemed as much alive as ever, but in such a state of amazement at all the strange experiences that he was going through, that he quietly submitted to let Don lay hold of his

collar, and escort him at a slow and dignified walk down the next flight.

They were half-way down when there was a quick click of a latch-key, and the front door opened. Doctor Ward and a stranger entered. Both stared in amazement.

“How under the canopy —” began Doctor Ward; but Donald interrupted him, explaining calmly:

“Goat ran away from the Odd-Fellow’s Lodge, over there. The poor creature is nearly starved; I’m taking it back.”

CHAPTER VI.

A PHILANTHROPIC SCHEME.

ONE morning, when the mumps were a thing of the past, Eunice and Cricket walked along to school arm-in-arm. Cricket swung her books, as usual, by the long strap, and Eunice had hers snugly tucked under her arm. Both were chattering as fast as their busy tongues could wag. As they turned around the corner into a quiet street, the sound of a crying child attracted their attention, though at first there was nothing to be seen.

"There it is," said Cricket. "See that mite up there."

The "mite" was a funny-looking little thing about three years old, poorly dressed, bare-headed, with a little flaxen pig-tail sticking out behind each ear. The child stood at the top of some steps, wailing steadily, and beating its little blue fists against the door.

"It's been shut out, poor little thing," said

Eunice, running up the steps and ringing the bell, vigorously. "Wait a moment, Cricket, till someone comes to the door."

The baby stopped crying and surveyed her new friend with a pair of staring, pale-blue eyes.

It was certainly a very dirty baby, and Eunice wondered at its belonging to such a nice-looking house. Then a trim maid opened the door.

"I found this baby, here, trying to get in," began Eunice, civilly, "so I rang the bell for her, and waited till you came to take her in."

The trim maid surveyed the baby in indignant scorn.

"It don't belong here, miss, for sure. The likes o' that!"

"Doesn't belong here? The poor little thing! Then she must be lost. She was pounding on your door and crying dreadfully. What shall I do with her?"

"'Deed, I don't know, miss," answered the maid, backing away and partly shutting the door, as if afraid that Eunice would insist on leaving the interesting infant there. It had immediately adopted Eunice as its protector, apparently, for it grasped her skirt with one hand, and with a thumb tucked deep into its

mouth, it stood passively staring from one to the other. Somebody must do something, that was clear.

"Come on," called Cricket, who had walked slowly on. "Won't she go in?"

"Come back a minute. The maid says she doesn't belong here. What shall we do with her? I suppose she's lost. Can't I leave her here? I have to go to school," added Eunice, turning to the girl, who had now left only a crack of door open.

"Deed, no. *We* didn't find her," said the girl, impertinently. "It doesn't belong anywhere about here. Take her to the police station. We can't take care of beggar's brats," and with that she shut the door, leaving Eunice staring as blankly at the door as the baby did at her dress.

"What a horrid, cross girl!" said Eunice, indignantly, at last, descending the steps slowly to accommodate her steps to the short, fat legs beside her. The child still clung closely to a fold of her dress.

"What shall we do with it? We'll be dreadfully late for school."

"Let's take it to school," suggested Cricket.

"How could we? Baby, what is your name, and where do you live?"

Baby uttered a gurgle that doubtless meant volumes, but which the girls could not interpret. She was a Dutchy-looking little thing, with a wide, chubby face and squat little figure. Her little flaxen pig-tails were about an inch and a half long, and were tied with white string.

"Shall we take her to the police station? Let's hurry, whatever we do. It's 'most nine."

"The police station? and have the poor little atom locked up in a big, black cell?" exclaimed Eunice, indignantly. "Never!" for her ideas as to the exact advantage of taking a lost child to a police station were somewhat vague.

"Let's take her to the little bake-shop woman by the school, and leave her there for the morning, anyway. I'm sure she'll take care of her. We'll take her home after school, and papa will see about her."

Eunice assenting to this proposal, they now took up the line of march. People glanced and smiled at the funny, dirty baby, with the handkerchief that Eunice tied over its head, and the two well-dressed children, but *they* did not notice it.

“Eunice, we might adopt it!” cried Cricket suddenly. “Wouldn’t that be fun? It could play with Kenneth, and ’Liza wouldn’t mind one more child to take care of.”

“What fun!” exclaimed Eunice. “And if ’Liza didn’t want the trouble we could do it ourselves. It could sleep in a crib in our room. I’d wash it one morning, and you could the next.”

“Yes, and we’d spend Saturday mornings making its clothes.”

“And we’d take it to walk when we got home from school —”

“And we’d teach it its letters —”

“And put it to bed —”

“Would we have to spank her if she was naughty?”

“Oh, do let’s *beg* them to let us have it for our very own, and bring it up ourselves. Would you like to live with us, baby?”

The possibility of a distracted mother, searching around for the child, somehow never occurred to the girls, in their planning about the little waif, and they chattered on, in their eagerness, till they reached the shop of the little baker, with whom they meant to leave the child.

The good-natured little woman, who knew the children well by sight, was quite interested in their story, and was entirely willing to take charge of the lost baby till one o'clock. She was an ignorant little German woman, and she never thought of telling the girls to send it to the police station to be kept till its friends could look it up.

The thought of the baby kept the girls excited all the morning. After school they started off immediately, without waiting, as usual, for their friends. The baby recognised Eunice as soon as she appeared, and pulled her dress delightedly.

"Could you lend us something to put on her head?" asked Eunice, eyeing the flaxen pig-tails doubtfully. "My handkerchief makes her look so queer, and I'm afraid she'll take cold without anything over her head."

The little bake-shop woman good-naturedly produced a very remarkable-looking cap of her own baby's, and tied it on the little waif's head.

"I haf ask her the name," she said, as she tied the strings, "but I no unnerstan' her. She try to talk, but she yust —"

"Jabbers," said Cricket. "I should say she

did. Good-by ! Thank you ever so much for taking care of her for us."

When the girls arrived at home they found a free field. Mamma had gone to Marbury to spend the day with grandma, and had taken Kenneth with her. Marjorie was out to lunch with a friend ; and papa, Jane said, had been unexpectedly called out of town an hour ago, and would not be back that night. They took the baby up to the nursery, and introduced their prize to astonished 'Liza and the twins.

"But you can't *keep* it," said 'Liza. "I jest guess its poor mother is running all around the streets looking for it."

"Oh, do you think so?" said Eunice surprised. "Why, I never thought of her. Well, of course, papa will advertise the baby, and do everything about it, but if we *don't* find anyone belonging to her, we are going to keep her, Cricket and I."

Whereupon 'Liza pretended to faint away.

The twins were perfectly delighted with the addition to the family.

"It's just like the little boy we finded once," piped up Zaidie, "only it's a girl. Auntie wouldn't let us keep it."

"This is a really, truly, losted baby, though, and Phelps wasn't," explained Helen. "He had only runned away."

The "losted baby" here took its thumb out of its mouth, and suddenly began to cry.

"It's hungry!" announced Cricket, with the air of one discovering America. "What do you s'pose it can eat, 'Liza?"

"'Most anything it can get, I rather guess," said 'Liza. "That kind generally does, and is glad to get it, too."

"She isn't 'that kind,'" said Cricket indignantly, resenting the tone. "Come, baby; we'll go down-stairs and get some bread and milk. You 'ittle tunnin' sing!" as the baby stopped in its howl as suddenly as it had begun, and trotted away contentedly with the girls.

Cook duly exclaimed over "the find," but she reiterated the advice of the cross maid, and recommended them to take the baby to the police station.

"Why does *everybody* want to send this poor little mite to the police station?" cried Eunice. "It hasn't done a thing, only got lost, and prob'ly it didn't want to do that; and everybody wants to shut it up in a big, black cell. Papa

can advertise it when he gets home, if he likes, and if anybody comes for it they can have it. If no one *does* come, we'll keep you ourselves; won't we, baby? Drink the milk, now."

"Wish we knew its name," said Cricket.

"Let's name it something ourselves," suggested Eunice.

"To be sure. Don't you know when Pharaoh's daughter found Moses she named him Moses, herself? Oh, Eunice, let's call her *Mosina*!"

"Oh, *Cricket*, how lovely! Just the thing! We didn't find her in the bulrushes, but we did find her on some steps. Oh, you darling *Mosina*! I *hope* your mother won't come for you!"

When the new arrival had finished her luncheon, and the children had had theirs, they carried *Mosina* off to their room. Zaidie and Helen immediately came toiling up from the nursery, to help entertain their guest. Fortunately she was not at all shy, and jabbered and gurgled in her unintelligible baby talk, showing the greatest readiness to be amused.

"La! she's awful dirty," said Eliza, looking in on them presently. "I wouldn't touch her with a ten-foot pole."

"Let's wash her, and dress her up in Kenneth's things," cried Cricket, straightway catching hold of Mosina, who speedily stood arrayed only in her own rosy skin; for the dirt which 'Liza had exclaimed at, was really chiefly on her hands and face.

Eunice drew the water in the bathtub, and all four, with great laughing and excitement, superintended a very thorough scrubbing process, to the infinite amazement of the small child, who had probably never been so scrubbed before since she was born.

There was a small bruise on one side of the round, dimpled thigh, that presently caught Zaidie's attention.

"Here's another dirt-spot, Eunice," she said, with an air of much importance at the discovery. It was so delightful to be the scrubber instead of the *scrubbee*. She seized the nail-brush, and squeezing in under Eunice's arm, began vigorously applying it to the baby's soft flesh. That small person instantly howled again.

"Stop, Zaidie! that isn't dirt, it's a bruise," said Eunice, taking the nail-brush away. "Can't you tell the difference?"

"Not unlets I poke 'em," said Zaidie, looking

surprised. "When I have one I always poke it, and if it hurts I know it's a bruise. If it doesn't I guess it's dirt. I couldn't tell it on the baby, could I?"

"You had better experiment on yourself," said Cricket, laughing. "There, Miss Mosina, you're pretty clean now, I think. Let's take her out, Eunice. Put down the big bath-towel, Zaidie."

Baby had endured the process in awed silence thus far, but when she stood dripping like a little cupid on the bath-towel, she patted her round, fat legs with every appearance of delight, and even attempted to climb back into the tub. It was probably her first experience of a plunge.

"You *cunning* thing!" cried Eunice, as rapturously as if she had never seen a small child tubbed before. "Cricket, won't you run and ask 'Liza for some of Kenneth's clothes? I don't want to put her dirty ones on her again."

Cricket ran off and presently came back, laughing.

"'Liza says she couldn't dress such little beggars in gentlemen-folkses' children's clothes, but finally she let me have these old ones, that

mamma had put by to give away. Let me see; where do you begin?"

"I know," said Zaidie; and by the united efforts of all four, Mosina was presently arrayed.

This process had taken up a great part of the afternoon, and at this moment, Marjorie, who had just returned, came running up-stairs.

"Oh, have mamma and Kenneth come back so early?" she said, catching sight of a tiny figure in a familiar blue dress.

"No, but this is our new baby, and we're going to adopt it, if its mother doesn't come for it; and I don't much believe she will, for it was pretty dirty, and probably she doesn't care for it much, so Eunice and I are going to keep it," poured out Cricket in a breath.

Marjorie dropped against the newel-post.

"*Adopt* it? What, in the name of common sense, are you talking about, Cricket? Where did the atom come from?"

"We found her in the street this morning," explained Eunice, "and we couldn't find anybody that belonged to her, so we *had* to bring her home, Marjorie. We couldn't leave her to starve, could we? Poor little mite! she was freezing cold."

Mosina, quite aware that she was under discussion, clung to the dress of her first friend, sucking her thumb, and staring from one to the other with her solemn blue eyes.

"But, my dear children," began Marjorie, in a very superior, elder-sisterly tone, "that is perfectly absurd. With all the raft of children we have now, we can't adopt a whole orphan asylum. Besides, her mother will be looking for her; probably she is nearly frantic. You must send her to the police station."

"There!" cried Eunice, aggrieved, "that old police station again! Everybody says that. As if I would have this cunning thing, that loves me so, shut up in a horrid old black cell. Why, she'd be as afraid as anything."

"They don't put lost children in cells," began Marjorie, and then stopped, not quite certain what they did do with them. "At any rate, you ought to take her there. People always do."

"I shan't do it," said Eunice, stoutly.

"And, Marjorie, she'd be frightened to death among all those big men," expostulated Cricket. "We have just *got* to keep her."

"Then I'll tell you what I'll do," compro-

mised Marjorie. "I'll send Jane around to the police station, and tell them she's here, and describe her, and leave our address. If any one comes, they can send here."

Just then the door-bell rang.

CHAPTER VII.

MOSINA.

IN a moment, Jane came up with a telegram from mamma, saying that she would stay in Marbury all night, as it looked like rain, and Kenneth had a slight cold.

The children looked at each other in blank dismay. Mamma's absence, for one night, really made no difference at all, but they felt as if the bottom had dropped out of the house. Of course mamma had not known of papa's absence for the night, as he had been telegraphed for after she had left in the morning.

Conscientious Marjorie looked as if the affairs of the nation rested on her shoulders.

"Oh, dear me!" she sighed. "And this baby on my hands." And then she explained to Jane about the police station, and what she wanted.

"Now, if the child is to stay here to-night, we must arrange about its sleeping," she added.

"In Kenneth's bed," piped up Zaidie.

"I'll see 'Liza about it," said Marjorie, turning to the nursery. "Take her up-stairs, Eunice, do, and keep her amused till dinner."

"I'll tell you, Miss Marjorie," said 'Liza in confidence, "them children have the notion of adopting that baby. Of course it's all nonsense, but you let 'em have her in their room to-night, and they'll get off the notion. Tell 'em I can't have the bother of it here. 'Course I'll sleep with one ear open, and if they get into trouble, I'll go up."

"Very well, 'Liza, I'll do that," said Marjorie, turning away.

Eunice and Cricket proclaimed themselves perfectly *delighted* with the arrangement. It was just what they meant to do, anyway.

"Of course, Marjorie, if *we* adopt the baby, we'd expect to take all the care of it, you know," said Cricket. "'Liza has enough to do with the younger ones; 'course she'll sleep here. Eunice, you can have her half the night, and I'll take her the other half."

"I may forget to wake up," objected Eunice. "Suppose I take her to-night into my bed, Cricket, and you take her to-morrow night. There's the dinner-bell. She can stay in the

nursery with 'Liza and the twins, and get her supper, while we're at dinner."

"Come, Mosina," said Cricket. "Oh, Marjorie, I forgot to tell you, we named her Mosina, after Moses."

"You are the most ridiculous children about names," said Marjorie, laughing. "Come to dinner now. After dinner let us try that duet, Eunice."

Marjorie and Eunice were both musical, and each played exceedingly well for their respective years. Although Cricket loved music, she had no aptitude for the piano, and her lessons had been discontinued. Instead, her talent for her pencil was being cultivated. But all the children were more or less musical. Marjorie and Eunice both had very good voices, and, with Donald's aid, they often practised trios, as well as duets by themselves.

After dinner, Marjorie and Eunice played duets for a time, but Eunice was so impatient to get back to her adopted baby, and made so many mistakes, that presently Marjorie, in disgust, sent her off. The two younger girls immediately flew up to the nursery.

'Liza was getting the twins ready for bed,

and gave Eunice some night-things of Kenneth's for her charge, together with a shower of instructions for the night. Then the children carried off the baby, nodding and heavy-eyed, but quiet and stolid still.

With much giggling and fun, and a feeling of immense importance, the two girls finally had Mosina undressed and ready for bed. By this time she was almost asleep on their hands.

"Just see this room!" exclaimed Eunice, looking about her, after the infant was safely tucked away in her cot. "Doesn't it look as if a cyclone had struck it? It's more mussed up than the nursery ever gets with all three children there."

"We'll put it in order to-morrow, for it's Saturday, and we'll have plenty of time," said Cricket, gathering up the baby's things with a sweep of her arm, and putting them on a chair. "Come on down-stairs again. Doesn't it seem grown-up and motherly just to turn down the gas and go down and leave the baby asleep? *Won't* mamma be surprised when she comes home?"

"We must listen to see if she cries," said Eunice, beginning to feel the responsibility of a family.

The children went down-stairs again, to the back parlour, where Marjorie was deep in to-morrow's trigonometry. They each took a book and pretended to read, but each found herself starting up at every sound, and asking each other if that was the baby's voice. A dozen times Eunice tiptoed to the front hall and stood listening at the foot of the stairs, with a queer feeling of the necessity of keeping very quiet, although she certainly had never felt that necessity with the twins or her small brother. A dozen times Cricket started up, fancying she heard a little wail from above.

"Dear me!" sighed the latter, at last, "I know now what mamma means by saying she sleeps with her ears open. I have one ear upstairs, and the other on my book, and I've read this page six times, and I have forgotten to turn over."

"It shows your distracted condition, if you are trying to read with your ears," Marjorie stopped her studying to observe. "Don't bother about that infant, girls. She's all right. *I'm* only thinking about her poor mother. Jane said there had been no inquiries at the police station."

"Everybody's been firing that police station at our heads all day," said Eunice, "but I couldn't bear to have the poor little thing put in a cell."

"But they don't put lost children in cells, goosie," said Marjorie. "I suppose they have a woman to take care of them. They send to the Central Office and tell them they have a lost child there. Then anybody who has lost a child goes to the nearest station and tells about it. Then they send to the Central and ask if a lost child has been reported there, and then they telegraph back if it has, and the parents go and find it, wherever it is. You know I sent to the station to say it is here."

"How very simple," said Eunice, thoughtfully. "I wish we had known that this morning. I didn't think about the mother's part of it, as I do now. How we would feel if Kenneth was lost for even an hour."

"Come, Eunice," said Cricket, shutting her book with a slam. "Let's go to bed. I've had such an exciting day that I'm just *reeking* with sleep. Good night, Meg."

"Good night, and take care of your infant."

The children tiptoed into their room, and turned up the gas a very little.

“Do look at that child,” said Eunice, stopping short.

Certainly if Mosina was quiet by day she plainly made up for it at night. She had twisted, and wiggled, and kicked, till the clothes were lying in every direction, and she herself was curled into a little ball at the foot of the bed, with her beloved thumb tucked into her mouth as far as it would go.

“How shall we get her back again without waking her? Would you dare lift her?”

“We’ll have to. You can’t sleep without any clothes over you, can you? Come up here, you rascal,” and Cricket lifted the small round ball gently in her arms and laid her, right side up, at the other end of the bed. Baby settled down with a gurgle.

After the girls were in bed, and silence and darkness had reigned for ten minutes, Eunice suddenly remarked:

“Do you know, Cricket, I never realised before how small this cot is. This midget seems to take up all the room. She slips right down into the middle.”

“Sleep on the other side,” murmured Cricket, drowsily.

"I can't very well sleep on both sides of her at once; I'll move her along once more."

Silence again, broken by a sudden grunt from Eunice.

"Ugh! she's planted her feet whack in my stomach. Cricket, she flops just like a little fish. I never know where she's going to land next; and she's a regular windmill with her arms. There she comes, whack, on my nose again."

"Tell — her — to — stop," advised Cricket, in far-away tones.

"Much good that would do! Now, you mid-geet, get over on your own side, and stay there;" and Eunice, having lost all fears of awakening her protégé, placed her with much firmness back on the other side.

Poor Eunice! As the cot was only three feet wide, and as she was entirely unaccustomed to sleeping with any one, much less a wriggling, squirming baby, she naturally found her present experience rather a trying one. She listened enviously to Cricket's even breathing, which showed that she was safe in the Land of Nod; but when she herself was almost there, a tiny foot or hand was suddenly planted on her, or

the soft, round little body came rolling over, and landed plump upon her.

"*Oh, DEAR!*" cried Eunice at last, in despairing capitals, "how do mothers ever sleep at night, if their babies sleep with them?"

She stretched herself on the outermost limit of her cot, after pushing Mosina well along to the other side. For a time quiet reigned, and Eunice's heavy eyelids fell. She was peacefully sailing away to dreamland, when suddenly a thud and a roar awakened them. Of course Mosina had fallen out of bed.

"Cricket! Cricket! do get up and light the gas! I'm afraid to get out for fear I'll step on her. Do hurry, Cricket!"

Cricket tumbled sleepily out of bed and groped for the matches, which hung in a little swinging receiver on the gas-jet. She hit it accidentally, and every match went flying to the floor. Meanwhile Mosina steadily roared. Eunice leaned over the edge and felt around for her.

"Where have every one of those plaguey matches gone?" demanded Cricket, with emphasis, groping around on her hands and knees, and hitting every kind of object save a match.

Just at that moment Eliza, aroused by the uproar, appeared, carrying a candle.

"The baby fell out of bed," explained Eunice, somewhat unnecessarily, springing out of bed herself as the welcome light appeared. Mosina lay sprawled on her back, kicking her fat legs, and screaming lustily.

"'Tain't hurt, by the way it cries," said Eliza, picking up the baby with a practised hand. "It's mad. There now! 'sh! hushaby! Where was it sleeping, Miss Eunice?"

"Here in my bed. Cricket, perhaps it *would* be better to take half a night apiece instead of every other night. I want *some* sleep. She thrashes like a whale. I'm all black and blue where she has punched me."

By this time Mosina, hushed in Eliza's arms, had gradually ceased crying and was shutting her sleepy eyes again.

"Yes, give her to me," said Cricket, hopping into bed, and holding out her arms. "Isn't she soft and warm, though. She's just like a little hot-water bag. I'll put you on the side next the wall, you cunning thing, so you can't fall out again."

Eunice jumped into bed and drew up the

blankets with a perfect groan of relief, and Eliza departed, leaving them in darkness and quiet again.

“If she kicks *very* hard, Cricket, I’ll take her back, after I’ve had a little — snooze — but — I’m so —” and Eunice dropped off, even as she spoke. Cricket cuddled the baby in her arms, where it actually lay still for a minute or two, and Cricket improved the opportunity to go to sleep herself.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BEDFELLOW.

Two or three hours passed, and the household were all asleep; Cricket, in the intervals of her disturbed dreams, had fished her little charge up from her feet, and extricated her from an amazing tangle of sheets and blankets. She had awakened from an oppressive dream of drowning to find the baby sprawling over her chest, with both legs around her neck. She had patiently restored her each time to her own corner. At last, thoroughly tired out with this unaccustomed wakefulness and responsibility, she fell into a sleep much heavier than usual, regardless of Mosina's continued antics.

At last a strange, new sound slowly penetrated her consciousness, and she gradually awakened to the fact that there had been a queer, wheezing noise close to her ear for some time. Still dazed with sleep, she lay bewildered for a moment or two, till it suddenly dawned on her

that the queer noise came from the small atom at her side. Mosina was wheezing and choking in a way that became more alarming every moment.

"Eunice! Eunice!" cried Cricket, suddenly realising that something was seriously wrong; "for goodness sake, wake up! Something's the matter with the baby!"

"In a moment," answered Eunice, sleepily, thinking that she was being called to breakfast.

"*Eunice*, get up! Run for 'Liza! Baby's *dying*!"

"What?" cried Eunice, startled into full wakefulness. "Oh, Cricket! What is it? What awful noises!"

"I don't know what's the matter," said Cricket, feeling her way to the gas again. "Oh, *do* hurry! Here, you light it, and I'll go." And Cricket flew away barefooted.

In a moment she was back again, and directly after 'Liza appeared, in a trailing flannel wrapper and felt shoes.

"Croup!" she had exclaimed to herself, as she heard the wheezing noises away down-stairs. "A bad case, too," she added to herself, as she entered the room.

Eunice had the gas lighted, and the two shivering, frightened little girls hung over the cot, where the baby lay fighting for breath, with that dreadful, whooping noise that mothers know and dread. Eliza came forward quickly; although she had not much head for any emergencies out of her own line, she was a good and efficient nurse where children's ordinary ailments were concerned.

"Put on your dressing-gowns and slippers," she ordered the children, she herself flying to the wash-stand, and wringing out a towel in cold water. "Run up-stairs, Miss Eunice, and wake Jane, and tell her to go for Dr. Townsend. Pass me a flannel petticoat out of your drawer, Cricket, please. I dasn't wait to go to the nursery for things."

The children flew on their respective orders, and in a twinkling Eliza had a cold compress on the baby's chest, well protected by Cricket's blue flannel petticoat.

Jane appeared a few moments later, ready to go for the doctor, and Marjorie, aroused by the voices and general commotion, came flying up-stairs.

"Them big, fat children always has croup

dretful," said Jane cheerfully. "Like as not she'll die."

"Die!" echoed 'Liza, scowling at her. "You get along, Jane Lackett, and bring that doctor, and tell him Doctor Ward's away; and don't let the grass grow under your feet, neither."

"Oh, 'Liza, will she die?" whispered Cricket, clinging to Eliza's hand.

"Oh, lawks! I guess not, honey; but she's fair to middlin' sick. Helen ain't nothin' to her. Never heard a worse wheezin'. S'pose she's took a fine cold this morning, runnin' round without any hat on."

It was dreadful to the girls, who had never seen a bad attack of croup before, to stand there helplessly, and watch the little creature fighting for breath, every respiration coming with a long whoop that seemed to tear the little frame apart.

"Can't you do anything, 'Liza?" begged Marjorie. "It's dreadful to see her suffer so. Aren't there any medicines to give her?"

"Yes, Miss Marjorie; there's syrup of squills. It's in your ma's medicine chest. No; it's all out, I know. I'll give her some vaseline, if you'll get some."

“ Make her *eat* that stuff ! ” exclaimed Cricket. “ Why, it will choke her ! Don’t do it. It’s cruel ! ”

But Eliza, unheeding, took a spoonful of vaseline, and opening the baby’s already gasping mouth still further, put the soft, slippery mass down the poor little throat.

Presently the doctor came, and to the children’s amazement, he nodded approvingly over the vaseline. Then he ordered them all off to bed.

“ Go and finish the night in mamma’s bed, you and Cricket,” suggested Marjorie. “ ’Liza, I’ll be on the lookout for our children, since my room is next to theirs, and you must stay here. Is the baby very sick, doctor ? ”

“ It’s a pretty bad attack, but nothing to be frightened about,” said the doctor cheerily. “ But who in the world is the youngster ? ”

While Marjorie explained, Eunice and Cricket crept off to mamma’s room, and tucked themselves into her wide bed, feeling as if they had been through a lifetime’s experience since nine o’clock that night. How delightfully peaceful and care-free it seemed to settle down without anyone to look after but themselves.

“ Really, Cricket, it may sound funny to you,”

said Eunice, squeezing her sister, "but I feel as if I had had babies in my bed for *years*. It actually seems funny not to feel her squirming around."

"And I'm very sure, for my part, that adopting babies is not what it's cracked up to be," returned Cricket, decidedly. "Eunice, don't let *us* adopt her, even if her mother doesn't come for her. Mamma can, if she wants to, or papa can find somebody else to. I think we have enough children, anyway."

"She would take a lot of time," asserted Eunice.

"Yes; and think of dressing her every morning!" added Cricket.

"And having her sleep with us, and kicking us black and blue every night!" said Eunice feelingly.

"Yes, and keeping us awake. Wonder how the poor little thing is."

"The doctor and 'Liza will take care of her. Listen, Cricket! There's the clock actually striking two o'clock! Mercy! were we ever awake so late before?"

"Never. I feel forty-six years older than I did last night, don't you, Eunice?"

But a grunt was Eunice's only answer, and Cricket speedily followed her to the Land o' Nod.

The doctor and Eliza had a busy hour over the baby, and at the end of that time it was sleeping quietly, and the night was finished in peace and quiet.

It was very fortunate that Eliza was the most patient, long-suffering nurse imaginable, for she accepted Mosina as a temporary inmate of the nursery the next day as a matter of course, and looked after her as carefully as after the other children. Jane made another visit to the police station, after breakfast, but only brought back the information that no lost child had yet been reported.

Papa returned about luncheon time, and to his great amazement, was presented to the new member of his family.

"We thought at first we'd like to adopt her, but we've come to the conclusion we don't care much about it," confessed Eunice frankly, at the end of her tale; "at least, we don't if she has to sleep with us."

"Because, papa," chimed in Cricket, "you see, she's the restlessest, squirmiest child you

ever saw. Oh, yes; she looks mild enough now, but if you felt her wiggle just one night, you'd believe it."

"You both of you look as if you had been on a prolonged spree," said Doctor Ward, pinching the rather pale cheeks of his two ex-philanthropists. "Never mind, I'll look out for the baby. Somebody will be sure to turn up for her."

And somebody did. About seven o'clock that evening, the somebody marched up the steps and rang the bell furiously. It was a distracted little Dutch woman, who in broken English demanded her baby. Mosina was brought down, but after the first little gurgle of pleasure at seeing her mother, sucked her thumb as placidly as ever, while her mother hugged and kissed her rapturously, pouring forth a stream of mingled Dutch and English. It was some time before she was calm enough to explain the situation.

She went out to work by the day, when she could, and, when she was at work, would often leave the baby at her married sister's for two days at a time, as the sister lived at a distance, and she would sometimes be too tired to go for her at night. The day before, she had taken

her there as usual. However, the little thing must have slipped out and run after her, and the sister thought the mother had taken her, after all. She had to go to work at a place on the other side of the city for two days, and so had not gone for the child the night before, thinking, of course, she was safe, as usual. She was wild with terror when she went there and found that her sister thought she had the child with her. They went immediately to a police station, and soon had the necessary information of the baby's whereabouts.

The little Dutch mother was overwhelmed with gratitude at the kindness and care her baby had received. She said that the little thing often had croup, and very bad attacks, too.

Mamma, who had returned from Marbury just before dinner, began to talk quietly to the excited little woman, and learned her story. It was very short and very simple. They had come over to this country two years before, and did well till her husband was killed by an accident a few months previous. She spoke so little English that it was hard for her to get work, and their little savings slipped away

quickly. Now she was anxious for all the work by the day she could get.

Mrs. Ward listened sympathisingly, promised to speak to her friends about her, and gave her a bundle of Kenneth's clothes to take home, besides the ones that Mosina was then arrayed in.

"So you don't want to go into the orphan asylum business?" said papa, pulling Cricket's curls, when the excitement was all over, and Mosina and her mother had departed, laden down with bundles.

"I think I *might* like it," said Cricket, meditatively, "if only I didn't have to sleep with the orphans."

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS.

CHRISTMAS time was approaching, and the Wards' house was to be full to overflowing of young people for a week or two. Donald was to have a college friend of his with him for several days. Eunice and Cricket were to have their little Kayuna friends, Edith Craig and Hilda Mason, to visit them; and, at the last moment, Mrs. Somers had written, begging that Will and Archie might be taken in, if possible, as Edna had just come down with scarlet fever, and they had to go away. Five extra people in an already rather full house made a great deal of planning and arranging necessary, but I almost think that the children enjoyed the bustle it all made as much as the expected visit.

Donald had an extra bed put up in his room for his friend. Eunice was to share the spare room with Edith Craig, and Hilda was to have

Eunice's cot, according to the first plan; but when Will and Archie had to be arranged for, mamma could think of nothing else to do but to give them the girls' room, and put up two more cots in the spare room — fortunately a large one — so that all four girls could sleep there. The children were ready to stand on their heads with delight at this arrangement.

"So boarding-school-y!" beamed Cricket, surveying the room, when the beds were all ready. It looked, for all the world, like a hospital ward. "Oh, what fun we'll have! You were such an *angel*, mamma, to arrange for us all to be together."

"I hope I won't regret it," said mamma, laughing, but looking a little dubious.

"Indeed, you won't," promised Eunice. "We'll be good, truly. Only it will be such fun to plan jokes on the boys; and they can't do much to us when we are all together, you see."

"Remember, I don't like practical jokes, dear," said mamma. "They are dangerous things."

"Oh, we'll tell you all the things we do," promised Cricket, "and we truly won't do any-

thing you think we'd better not. *Please* don't say we can't play any jokes."

Christmas fell on Thursday, and the guests were to arrive the next day. Christmas itself was the gala day it always is in a house full of happy young people. It began, of course, with the usual excitement over the stockings, big and little, that hung on the back-parlour mantel. Then there were the presents that were too big to go into stockings to be oh-ed and ah-ed over. Then came the church service and the Christmas dinner, and in the evening, a little party at a neighbouring house.

The girls from Kayuna arrived Friday afternoon. Doctor Ward took Eunice and Cricket to the station to meet them, and in due time four broadly smiling girls walked into the house, where the little guests were warmly welcomed by mamma and Marjorie.

Edith Craig was a tall, fine-looking girl, a year older than Eunice, and, being the eldest of five children, she was very mature for her years. She was really very companionable for Marjorie as well as for Eunice. Cricket she regarded as a mere infant, and her motherly ways towards that young lady were very amusing. All the

family were very fond of Edith, however; she was a bright, jolly, sensible girl, who seemed equally happy whether she was exchanging confidences with Eunice, or sitting with Mrs. Ward and chatting over her embroidery, or romping with Cricket, or giving Doctor Ward intelligent attention when he was talking of some late medical discovery, or playing duets with Marjorie, or frolicking with the children in the nursery. A well-bred, adaptable girl is always charming.

Cricket thought that Hilda had grown very much in the four months since she had seen her, but her bronze curls were as smooth, and her clothes as trim, and she was as plump and pretty as ever.

The little hostesses had planned enough for the ten days' visit to fill a month, as children generally do; but that was very much better than not having enough to do. Saturday, the first day, was a lovely beginning, for Mrs. Drayton had planned one of Emily's pleasant little *matinée* parties. Ten children, including the four of the Ward party, were invited to lunch with Emily and go to the *matinée* afterwards, to see "Robin Hood." This was an especially great treat for Eunice and Cricket, for they were

seldom allowed to go to the theatre, and their little guests rarely had the chance. The lunch was perfect; Mrs. Drayton and Emily were as delightful as they always were; "Robin Hood" was charmingly given, and the day was a perfect success.

They found when they reached home that Will and Archie had just arrived, and as Donald's friend had come also, the whole party collected around the dinner table.

Doctor Ward looked around beamingly on the flock, as he flourished his knife over the big turkey.

"Cricket, this is an improvement on your orphan asylum, I think," he said. "How is it? Do you prefer the babies?"

"I really think, now that I've had experience," said Cricket reflectively, "that I like middle-aged people, like ourselves, better. We aren't so much trouble, I'm sure."

There was a shout at Cricket's "middle-aged people."

"I mean people who aren't little things, like Zaidie and Helen, or grown up, like mamma," explained Cricket defensively. "Just scattered along, like all of *us*, I mean."

The days flew by on wings. Edith was sufficiently companionable to Marjorie for the latter to be included in many of the little doings that mamma planned for the younger girls. Will and Archie sometimes accompanied them also, and sometimes were off on their own account.

Archie was as much of a tease as ever, and with the four girls right under his thumb, so to speak, he had a most congenial employment in tormenting them. Indeed, the various tricks on both sides formed a large part of the entertainment.

The second night of his arrival, Archie carefully made apple-pie beds, in which he was an adept, for the occupants of the spare room, and the girls soon found it wisest not to go to bed on any night without carefully examining everything in the room. One night all the sheets were thickly strewn with salt, which, being white, did not show at a casual glance, but was painfully apparent when they lay down. Again, he cut up the splints of a number of whisk brooms, and the straws he scattered on the mattress under the sheet. Did you ever go to bed under the same circumstances? It is not

comfortable. Another night, he lined the pillow-cases with white paper, carefully basted on the ticking. Once, by an ingenious arrangement of some nails tied together with string and hung outside the window one windy night, a weird sound, like a clanking chain, was made, and the girls had a lively hunt for the mysterious noises that kept them all awake.

Mamma watched the fun carefully, but let them go on, as long as it was all good-natured. And indeed, the girls found many a way to repay their ingenious tormentor. They sewed up the sleeves of his night-shirt securely, not only of the one he was wearing, but of all he had with him, and Will's also, lest Archie should borrow. They filled his tooth-powder bottle with soda, and stuffed the fingers of his best gloves with cotton.

One night, when Archie had been particularly bad all day, Cricket took her revenge by creeping stealthily into his room after he was asleep — having been kept awake herself, for the purpose, by the united efforts of the other three — and very cautiously pasted postage stamps over his eyelids. Like most boys, when once asleep, he rivalled the "Seven Sleepers," and he never

stirred during the performance. Adorned with the stamps, he peacefully slept on all night, while Cricket jubilantly crept back to bed. By morning, the stamps stuck as tightly as if they had been nailed there.

When Archie awoke, to his horror, he could not open his eyes. He felt of them, but the stamps stuck so close that he could not imagine what was the matter, and called out in alarm to Will. Will, of course, when he once opened his own sleepy eyes, was nearly in convulsions of laughter over the blue one-cent stamp adornment on Archie, but, in pretended fright, advised him not to touch his eyes till he could call his uncle. He summoned Doctor Ward in hot haste. Archie, really much disturbed in mind over this strange disorder, was lying perfectly still when his uncle entered. The doctor, entering into the joke, told him that it was nothing serious yet, only a strange growth that had come during the night — perhaps from cold — and he would get his surgical instruments and remove it. Archie groaned at the sound, but his uncle assured him that it would not hurt him much, if he kept perfectly quiet and did not touch his eyes, while he got his instruments. Then the

doctor stepped to the bath-room, and came back with a sponge and warm water, and, after much preparation, he began swabbing Archie's eyes, talking all the time, till Archie was nearly frantic.

"By Jupiter, uncle! How long will I have to keep my eyes bandaged after this operation? What ails the confounded things, anyway? They *feel* all right, now, if only I could get them open."

"There!" said his uncle at last, "now try, *very* carefully, if you can open your eyes. Slowly, mind."

Archie raised his eyelids, and looked about him.

"Why, they're all right," he cried in great surprise. "They don't hurt a bit. Did you *cut* something off, uncle? Didn't it bleed? Here, you idiot," — to Will, who was rolling on the floor in convulsions of laughter, — "what's the matter with you?"

"Oh! oh!" gasped Will. "Did it bleed, uncle? That's too much! The dear, brave little boy! He never whimpered."

Archie, in a state of raging indignation, flung a pillow at him.

“You old lunatic!”

Doctor Ward held up one of the stamps by a pair of nippers.

“A nocturnal visit of a certain household insect, usually harmless, is plainly the cause of your trouble, my boy,” he said, “but as I told you, I do not consider it serious. Bathe your eyes in warm water. Also, I recommend temporary seclusion, and the cultivation of a calm and forgiving frame of mind.”

Another pillow went whack at Will, as a partial relief to Archie’s helpless rage. He only wished he dared throw one at his uncle, as Doctor Ward went out, laughing.

No remarks were made at breakfast time relative to the situation. Archie gazed haughtily past Cricket, and devoted himself ostentatiously to Hilda, whom, usually, he rather snubbed. Like most people who love to tease, he could not easily endure a joke on himself. So he scorned Cricket’s overtures of peace, and even meditated refusing to join the skating party planned for that day. The skating party, however, had been in prospect for several days, and as even Donald and his friend, Mr. Herrick, were to join it, Archie could not quite make up his

mind to this sacrifice, even for the sake of punishing Cricket. In this trait Zaidie and Archie were comically alike. Both usually took revenge by making themselves thoroughly uncomfortable.

"I suppose Archie will treat me with an air of cold familiarity all day," said Cricket, in confidence to Will, as he took her skates, and Archie walked on ahead with Hilda. Hilda was delighted. Archie had usually so little to say to her.

Will went off in a shout of laughter at Cricket's remark. She thought it was at the memory of the morning.

"I don't think he ought to mind just a little joke like that, when he just *piles* jokes on other people," went on Cricket, in an injured tone. "Look at all the things he's done to us, and we smile at him just the same." /

The skating party was a grand success. They went out of town, on the street cars for several miles, to the lake, which was a glittering sheet of ice. The day was clear and not too cold. Everybody skated well, but Archie particularly excelled. He was up in every kind of fancy figure, and in the delight of showing off, his

wounded feelings were gradually soothed — at least outwardly.

“But I’ll get even with that little minx,” he said, grimly, to himself. “She’s altogether too fresh,” forgetting, as practical jokers generally do, that he had had the first innings.

They returned home in time for half past one luncheon, with the appetites of anacondas. No one noticed that Archie whipped into the dining-room, instead of going up-stairs with the others, when they first came in, chattering, and laughing, and glowing with exercise. In ten minutes time the luncheon-bell rang.

“Waffles! hurrah!” cried Will, boyishly, as Jane brought in his favourite dish.

“Auntie, you’re a brick!” chimed in Archie. “Miss Scricket, don’t you take all this syrup on yours, for I want some myself, and there isn’t much in the syrup jug,” and Archie peered in.

“You don’t need any, being so sweet yourself,” returned Cricket, pouring out a liberal supply of the clear, delicious-looking syrup from the jug that stood by her plate.

The next instant the family were startled by a most unmannerly gulp from Cricket, who clapped her hands over her mouth and bolted

from the table without the ceremony of an "Excuse me" to mamma. Everybody looked after her in surprise; then mamma, excusing herself, hastily followed her to the butler's pantry, whither she had retired. The sickest, forlornest-looking child imaginable held up a white face.

"It was — the — syrup," she managed to say "It's sour or something. Oh, I'm so sick at my stomach!"

Not waiting to investigate the matter at that moment, mamma called Sarah, who carried poor little Cricket up-stairs in her arms. A very unhappy hour followed. As soon as mamma could be spared, she flew down-stairs to the dining-room.

Archie stood by the window, drumming on the window-pane. He turned around as his aunt entered.

"Yes, I did it," he said. "It's castor-oil. I slipped in and emptied the syrup jug just before luncheon, and put some castor-oil in, out of a bottle in uncle's office. It won't hurt her, will it? I didn't think she'd get more than a taste of the stuff."

"It's nothing serious, only you've given poor

little Cricket a pretty bad quarter of an hour, my boy. It chances that oil of any kind, even salad oil, makes her deathly sick. She never eats salad or lettuce, if it is dressed; but of course you did not know that."

Archie looked uncomfortable.

"Of course I didn't, auntie, or I wouldn't have been such a brute."

"Surely not. It was just the 'chances of war.' It is always so with practical joking. Each goes a step farther than the other, till some one — generally the weaker party — gets the worst of it. Suppose you drop it now, dear?"

"See here, auntie," said Archie, awkwardly, "I — you know — well, Cricket really owes me one now. Let her go on and do me up, if she wants to. I'd a jolly lot rather she would; and I won't do another single thing after that. Did she bluster much?"

"No," said Mrs. Ward, smiling. "Cricket is always 'game,' as you boys say, and would not let me blame you. But let me say one more word, my lad. Since you love to play jokes and tease people, as well as you do, don't you think you might be a little generous, and let them

have the same sport with you, without losing your temper? Turn about is always fair play, my boy."

Archie looked slightly shame-faced — a most unusual state of affairs for him. But, as Mrs. Ward never nagged the children, a few words from her always had their due weight.

In a couple of hours, Cricket was ready to join the girls, who were clustered about the cosy open fire in mamma's room, laughing and chattering over their embroidery. Now that the violent nausea, which the least taste of oil always gave her, was over, Cricket was rather disposed to look upon the whole thing as very funny, after all. She was really rather amazed when the girls sympathised with her and energetically heaped abuse upon Archie.

"It wasn't anything," she insisted. "I'd have done it myself, if I'd have thought of it. Of course it isn't very pleasant to have your stomach sick at itself; but he didn't know I don't like oil. But, oh, mamma, I've thought of *such* a nice little trick to play on him now!"

"It's time to stop, dear," said Mrs. Ward. "Don't let's carry it any further."

"Please, mamma, it's such a *little* joke, and it

wouldn't hurt him a bit; and I do think he deserves a good taking-down," pleaded Cricket. "He'll crow over me, always, if I don't; he'll call me 'fraid cat,' and I'm *not* a 'fraid cat;' I'll leave it to anybody."

"Let's hear the joke," said mamma judicially, remembering Archie's own words; and Cricket unfolded her little scheme.

"I thought of that when I was sickest," she finished triumphantly. And mamma said she might do it.

That evening the boys had planned to go and make a formal call on May Chester. Formal calls were rather a new experience for both of them, and each felt as important as a little dog with a new collar. They went up-stairs, to get ready, directly after dinner, and were gone an unconscionably long time.

"I know those boys will try to sneak down-stairs, and get out without being seen," said Eunice, getting impatient for their appearance.

"They can't do it. I'm on the lookout with my little eye," chirped Cricket, from the portières. "Isn't it funny how ashamed boys always are of being dressed up! 'Sh! there they come now. Edith, you know you're to go out and

ask them to come in a moment. They won't suspect you."

"Slip out in the hall as if you were looking for something, and meet them by accident," advised Eunice.

Edith obediently sauntered out into the hall, and met the boys as directed. After a moment's conversation, she succeeded in coaxing them into the parlour, for approval from the family. Archie came in with a lofty expression, as if making formal calls on young ladies, with pale yellow kid gloves on, was an everynight affair. Will looked somewhat conscious.

"Is that your new suit, Archie?" asked Mrs. Ward. "How well it fits!"

"*Seems* to me," said Cricket, screwing up her face critically, "it sort of wrinkles across the shoulders," patting his back patronisingly.

Archie wheeled around to a mirror hastily.

"Wrinkles, Miss Scricket! You ought to be wrinkled yourself! It fits like a—a house-fire," he said indignantly, nearly twisting his neck off.

"And we all know how perfectly a house-fire fits," observed Marjorie.

Cricket continued patting Archie's back, and

smoothing out imaginary wrinkles. By the time he had reached the doorway she had succeeded in what she was trying to do, for as he went out, after waving a light yellow hand patronisingly to the girls, there was pinned across his back a broad slip of paper with good-sized printed letters on it:

“I’m such a little boy; please to send me home early.”

“There!” remarked Cricket with much satisfaction, as the front door shut, “I think Archie will be pleased to have May Chester see that. I winked at Will—he won’t tell; and he helped him on with his overcoat *very* carefully. I peeked to see.”

“I’d like to see his face when he finds it out,” said Hilda.

“Oh, *wouldn’t* I!” cried Cricket fervently. “And, mamma, Archie can do anything he likes to me now—I won’t pay him off again. I’ll tell him so.”

Half an hour later, Donald came in.

“Here’s something I picked up on the doorstep,” he said. “Probably a circular or something thrown down. Why, what’s this?”

He held it up. A burst of laughter from the

girls greeted it. It was that identical paper, which had probably been rubbed off by the overcoat, and had worked down.

Cricket looked perfectly blank for a moment, and then joined in the laughter.

“If Archie only knew it,” she cried, “*wouldn’t* he crow! Joke’s on me now, for sure!”

CHAPTER X.

THE BOY.

MRS. WARD came to the luncheon table the next day, holding up three pink tickets.

"A treat for the musical ones," she said, gaily. "Mrs. Chester has just sent around these tickets for the matinée performance of that little musical wonder, this afternoon. For some reason they are unable to use them."

"Hurrah!" said Marjorie, clapping her hands in true Cricket fashion, "I've been dying to hear him. Oh, Edith, people say he's the greatest *dear!*"

"I thought you and Edith and Eunice could go, dear," said Mrs. Ward. "You will enjoy it better than the younger ones."

"But don't you want to go yourself, mamma?" asked Eunice, quickly.

"No; for you know papa and I heard him, two weeks ago, when we were in New York. He certainly *is* a wonder, Edith. I don't care

much about prodigies, as a rule, but *his* playing is very wonderful. New York was wild over him."

"I've wanted to hear him *so* much," said Edith, enthusiastically. "It's perfectly lovely!"

"Then I'll take you two down-town with me," said Mrs. Ward to Cricket and Hilda. "Will it be too cold for ice-cream?"

The three *matinée* girls got off in good time. As they entered the lobby, they encountered Mrs. Drayton.

"I'm so glad to see you, girls," she said, in her cordial way. "I came early, and have been waiting here in hope of seeing some of you. I am going to the dressing-room, to see the little pianist, during the intermission, and I thought if I could find any of you, you would like to go too."

The girls fairly gasped. To go behind the scenes into that wonderful, mystical dressing-room, and actually see and touch a real, live individual that came out on the stage and played! Could it be true?

"Oh, Mrs. Drayton!" they all cried, breathlessly.

"I have seen him several times," Mrs. Dray-

ton went on. "The little fellow, with his father and some others, lunched with us yesterday. He is a perfect little dear. Just as childlike and sweet as if he never had been before the public at all."

Mrs. Drayton's husband, though a prominent lawyer, was a fine amateur violinist, and he kept closely in touch with all musical matters. His house was always a centre for amateur musicians, and he often entertained professionals.

"How lovely of you, Mrs. Drayton!" exclaimed Marjorie, enthusiastically. "It will be just delightful to see that cunning thing off the stage!"

This bit of thoughtfulness was just like Mrs. Drayton.

"I have a little box of toys for him," she went on, showing the corner of a white paper parcel under her long cloak. "We will take them in to him during the intermission. Where are your seats, Marjorie? Let me see your tickets. Oh, yes. Fortunately, they are near mine. You can get up and come out into the aisle when I do."

In due course of the programme, the marvellous ten-year-old came forward to take his place at

the piano, looking ludicrously tiny among the big German musicians. The grand piano seemed to swallow him up as he stood by it for a moment, bowing in a grave, self-possessed, yet childlike manner, in response to the applause that greeted him. He had a sweet, serene little face, with dark brown hair falling over his forehead. His broad lace collar made him look still younger than he really was.

He turned, after his bow, and climbed upon the piano-stool, settling himself with his small hands folded in his lap. Then he awaited the signal to begin, as composedly as if no large audience listened breathlessly for his first notes.

When the number was finished, he turned sidewise on the stool, and bowed to the audience, with his little feet swinging. At the renewed applause, he slipped down, bowing with a funny, quaint little gesture of his hands, and then turned and climbed to his perch again. Some one had started to lift him up, but he had put him aside with a dignified little motion. After the third number, his last in the first part, he slipped down again, made a hasty little bow, and scampered away like a flash, amid mingled laughter and applause.

At last came the intermission. Mrs. Drayton, followed by the girls, made her way to the dressing-room. She was well-known to the attendants, so she had no difficulty.

The Boy, the marvellous little musician, sat on the floor playing with a little train of cars that went choo-choo-ing over the carpet, propelled by steam made from real water in the tiny boiler.

"Look out for my cars there," he exclaimed, with a funny, foreign accent, as his visitors entered, not even glancing up at them in his absorbed interest. The lad's father stood by the door.

"Get up, my son, and greet these gracious ladies," said the father, in German, as he turned and spoke to Mrs. Drayton, himself. The Boy got up lingeringly, with a most bored expression, but his face changed and brightened as he recognised his kind friend, with whom he felt quite well acquainted. He sprang forward quickly, and, throwing his arms about her neck, he kissed her repeatedly in his pretty, foreign fashion. The girls looked on, amazed enough that he proved to be just an ordinary, every-day little boy.

"I thought we'd find him reading Beethoven's life, or, at least, studying the score," whispered Marjorie to Edith. "Just imagine that genius sitting down on the floor and playing *cars*!"

"I've brought these young ladies to see you," said Mrs. Drayton, putting the little fellow down. "Will you kiss them, dear?"

Marjorie and Edith and Eunice, all awe-struck at the idea of kissing a genius, bent down to the dear little boy, who dutifully kissed each one of them, first upon one cheek and then upon the other, in foreign fashion, as if it were a performance he was very used to.

"What have you brought me?" he demanded, in German, of Mrs. Drayton, standing before her in boy fashion, with his small feet somewhat apart, and his hands deep in his pocket.

"We all spoil him by always bringing him something, I suppose," said Mrs. Drayton to the girls, laughing at his tone, as she laid the box she had brought in his hands. He eagerly tore off the paper and the cover. The box contained a curious mechanical toy, which the Boy seized with delight. He immediately sat down on the floor to examine it.

Just at this moment, the strains of the violins

sounded again, and the call-boy came to say that he must go in a moment.

The Boy uttered an impatient exclamation that was equal to "Oh, bother!" in English, but he paid no other attention to his summons. His father was talking to Mrs. Drayton, and did not hear the call-boy enter or leave.

In a moment, the call-boy came again.

"Can't they wait a minute?" the Boy demanded impatiently, in English, which he spoke very well. "I *must* get this together." It's almost done."

The applause of the audience came to their ears. The call-boy repeated the summons in great impatience, knowing that he would be scolded for presumably not having given long enough notice.

"Very well," said the Boy, getting up reluctantly. "Please go not till I return, gracious ladies. I will play fast. I do so much wish to see this strange thing together," and off the child scampered, leaving the three girls staring in amazement at the remarkable manners of a prodigy.

"He's a real little boy," said Edith, drawing a long breath of surprise. "To see him playing

with these toys, and then imagine what he can do with those wonderful little fingers of his! Listen!" as the wonderful strains floated in.

"Isn't he a *darling*?" exclaimed Marjorie enthusiastically. "He isn't spoiled a bit!"

The boy's father had left the room, and Mrs. Drayton joined the girls.

"He is very carefully managed and trained," she said. "He is allowed to see very few people, on the whole, and as he has played before an audience ever since he was five years old, it is nothing to him. They want to keep him simple and unspoiled."

If the girls had been in their seats, they would have been amused to see the Boy come half running on the stage. He made a funny little side-wise bow, and climbed upon the piano stool. He had already kept the audience waiting a full minute, but he placidly took up a programme that lay on the piano, ran down it with his finger, found the place, creased the paper across, laid it down, and instantly was the inspired little musician again. It was a magnificent concerted piece, and the programme announced that the child had seen it, for the first time, the day before, but his tiny fingers interpreted the large,

grave measures in a way that held the great audience breathless. In a long, elaborate bit, that belonged to the first violin, he would soundlessly follow the notes with the fingers of one hand, as if in pure enjoyment of the swift motion.

The selection came to an end at last, with a grand succession of chords. The instant the last notes had died away, the child slipped down, and ran away without his bow, before any one could stop him. He darted into the dressing-room.

"Are you here yet, gracious ladies?" he said, breathlessly. "I'm so glad! Now I want to get this together; I don't play next time. Do you hear the clapping? They want me to come back and play again, but I *shan't* till it's time. See! this is the way it goes!"

Just then, amid the prolonged applause of the audience, some one came to lead him back to make his acknowledgments, and play again.

"I don't want to, now, and I *shan't*," he said, positively. "It isn't my turn. Let the next one play."

Another messenger arrived, here, with orders for him to come at once, as the applause renewed itself, growing still more insistent.

"I'm busy," the Boy said, sitting still. Just then his father came in, and bade him go at once. Reluctantly he put down his plaything, and went off to the stage. He made his way down the centre, between the musicians, bowing this way and that, and making his funny little foreign gestures with his hands. The applause redoubled at the sight of him, and a shower of flowers fell about him. He picked up a big bouquet of roses, that fell at his feet, and then saying perfectly distinctly to the first violin :

"There! that's all I'm going to do," he marched off again. Everybody laughed and applauded, although, of course, only the nearest musicians heard what he said. The conductor gave the signal for the next number, and the performance went on. By this time, Mrs. Drayton had taken the girls back to their seats.

After the last regular number of the programme, some musician was invited to come from the audience and give the Boy a simple theme for him to improvise upon. At this request, a well-known amateur musician, an old resident of the city, came forward, and went upon the stage. He was a tall, peculiar-looking man, with long hair lying on his shoulders. He

sat down on the piano-stool with an odd little mannerism, which he always had while playing, bending his head forward in a funny, rather affected way. For a theme, he played "Home, Sweet Home," very slowly. The Boy listened, with his head on one side, in his little, bird-like manner. When Professor Sands had played the air through once, he repeated it more rapidly. As he began, the boy put out his hand impatiently to stop him, but the professor played on. Whereupon, the Boy gave the pedal a petulant little kick, as if to say:

"What in the world is he playing that easy thing over again for? How many times does he think I need to hear a theme?"

But the professor finished it, and then resigned his seat to the child. As soon as he was seated, he placed his fingers stiffly on the keys, with his head bent forward, in an irresistibly funny imitation of the professor's manner, and played the theme through just as slowly as he had; then he straightened up, and darted through it again at lightning speed. Next he wove it into the most elaborate improvisations, recurring constantly to the theme. Whenever he played, even a dozen notes of it,

he instantly dropped into Professor Sands's mannerism. The audience were soon in convulsions of laughter, and even the professor himself, recognising the joke, laughed till the tears rolled down his cheeks. Not a muscle of the Boy's face moved. At last he flashed into "Yankee Doodle," slipped again to "Home, Sweet Home," playing it so swiftly that it was only a ripple of melody, dropped, then, into his imitation of Professor Sands again, and finished with a series of chords so rich and full that it seemed scarcely possible those tiny fingers could evoke them.

Between laughter and applause the audience made the roof ring. The Boy stood, still grave and demure as always, with his folded hands hanging in front of him, but those nearest caught the wicked little twinkle in the dark eyes. Of course, the three girls clapped their gloves into rags.

"Did you ever see such a perfectly fascinating darling?" sighed Marjorie, in pure delight, as the child was finally allowed to leave the stage.

"Marjorie, *do* you feel that you can ever touch the piano again, when you think of that

little mouse sitting up there and playing like that, without half trying?" said Edith mournfully. "It's just — just presumptuous to try!" This was said as they were coming down the steps, on the way out.

"Indeed, that is never the way to feel after listening to a genius," said Mrs. Drayton, cheerily. "Certainly you cannot expect to rival playing like that, but it should be an inspiration to you, to lift you up, and make you do your very best yourself."

"But one's very *bestest* is poor and weak after that," said Marjorie, earnestly. "I'm simply ashamed to look at a piano."

"Do not feel that. Do your best faithfully, and be patient with yourself. One need never be ashamed of one's *best*. Fortunately, it's no disgrace *not* to be a genius, which is a great consolation for all of us commonplace people. You need only be ashamed of a low standard. Aim high, and keep your eyes fixed on your goal, my girls. That's the secret of success."

CHAPTER XI.

A VISIT TO MOSINA.

“MAMMA, may I take Hilda to see Mosina this morning?” asked Cricket, the next day at breakfast. “The girls are going to the Museum, and we don’t want to go very much, and I do want Hilda to see our cunning Mosina.”

“Oh, I’m rather afraid, dear,” hesitated mamma. “You’ve never been there alone, you know. I’m not quite sure that it’s perfectly safe for you to go by yourselves. Is it, papa?”

“Down in —— Street? Why — yes — I think so. Are you sure you know the way, Cricket?”

“Perfectly sure, papa. What harm could come to us? *Do* let us! I know Mosina is just wild to see us. Oh, Hilda, she is the *cutest* thing! She’s just like a little roll of butter, with blue buttons for eyes; they’re so round.”

“Hilda, if you ever feel any inclination to

adopt a little sister — ” began Doctor Ward, with twinkling eyes, but Cricket went straight on :

“ She’s the fattest thing you ever saw. She’s all creases. She looks just as if she had strings tied around her legs and arms — regular *corduroy* arms.”

“ I’d love to see her. Do let us go, Mrs. Ward. We’ll be very careful and not get lost.”

“ I think I will let you. Keep your wits about you, Cricket, and don’t go wandering off anywhere. And I’ll send a little bundle of things down to Mosina’s mother. By the way, tell her to come up on Saturday, and I’ll have a big bundle ready for her. You can carry a few cookies down in a little box, couldn’t you, Hilda, if Cricket carries the parcel ? ”

The children set off on their expedition, in great glee, about ten o’clock. To be sure, Cricket had never been there alone before, but the way was very direct and simple, and the neighbourhood where Mosina’s mother lived, though poor, was perfectly respectable. Mrs. Ward had fulfilled her promise to little Mrs. Brummagen — had given her work, and told her friends about her, and moreover, had been to see her, herself, several times. The children still

called the baby "Mosina," and the child had already learned to use the name herself. As the children walked along, Cricket rehearsed, for the third or fourth time, the story of the finding and the temporary adoption of Mosina.

"She's awfully cunning, but I'm *glad* we didn't adopt her," concluded Cricket. "She would have been a lot of work. Children always are, I guess. I've thought, ever since that night, that I wonder how mothers stand it."

"Oh, mothers are made so!" said Hilda, comfortably.

"I wonder if that makes it really any easier for them," meditated Cricket, thoughtfully "Mamma says that I had colic just steadily till I was about six months old, and cried all the time, and would scarcely stay with the nurse at all. Mamma was up with me most every night. Think of it! And one night just used me up."

"Mothers don't mind," repeated Hilda. "Mamma just *loves* to do things for me, so I always let her," she added, superbly.

Cricket knit her brows a little, but as they were already at Mosina's home, she put the question away, to think over at her leisure.

Mosina and her mother were delighted to see their visitors. Mrs. Brummagen was hard at work, washing, and Mosina was tied to the door-knob by a string. This, at first sight, did not seem a necessary precaution, for she was sitting perfectly still, upon the floor, staring into space, when the girls entered. This one little room was the whole of Mrs. Brummagen's residence. Here she slept and washed clothes and did her bit of cooking, but it was all clean and tidy as Dutch neatness could make it. The girls delivered the box of cookies and the other things, and gave Mrs. Ward's message.

Hilda stared about her. She had never, before, been in the home of the very poor.

"Why, that's a bed! Does she sleep in the kitchen?" she whispered to Cricket, as Mrs. Brummagen went back to her washing, and Cricket lifted Mosina in her arms.

"This isn't the kitchen; it's all she has," responded Cricket, in an equally low voice. "Lots of people have only one room."

"Do they *like* it? Don't they want more room?" said Hilda, amazed; for she always found it difficult to realise that people occasionally did things that they did not like to do.

Her own experience, in that way, was very limited.

"They have to do it, goosie," said Cricket, who had often been with her mother to see her poor people. "I like to come here. Isn't it story-booky? See this cunning thing? Isn't she clean?"

"She *is* awfully fat. Can she talk?"

"Just jabbers; you can't understand her. Say 'How do you do?' baby."

Mosina was a fine plaything, for she was exactly like a big wax doll. The children could do anything they pleased with her.

"You wouldn't think this child could be such a torment at night," said Cricket, feelingly. "In the daytime she is just like a lump of dough. She stays just where you put her. But at night—oh, goodness! she was just as if she had yeast in her. I was black and blue for a week after she slept with me that night. Oh, *weren't* you bad!" addressing Mosina, with up-lifted finger.

Just then a sharp knock came at the door, and Mrs. Brummagen, drying her hands on her apron, hurried to open it. A messenger stood there, saying that she was wanted immediately

for a little extra work at the house of one of her regular employers. Some servant had unexpectedly left, and company was expected, and Mrs. Brummagen was requested to come back with the messenger for a few hours' work.

"Ach, himmel!" cried little Mrs. Brummagen, uncertainly. "What I do? Mine vash in ze wassa iss, und mine leetle babby alone vill be. I cannot."

"But you *must*," said the boy, impatiently. "She tole me not to come back widout yer. Leave de kid wid de naybors. Yer'll be back at four o'clock, she said."

"Oh, Mrs. Brummagen," said Cricket, eagerly, "you go, and I'll stay with the baby. I can as well as not. Mrs. Whitby lives near us, and you just stop and tell mamma about it, please. We'd like to, wouldn't we, Hilda?"

Poor little Mrs. Brummagen, overwhelmed by the thought of the young ladies staying and taking care of her baby, and distracted by the boy, who instantly urged the plan, hardly knew which way to turn. Cricket and Hilda both insisted loudly, the boy announced that she must go anyway, and so, before she really knew what she was about, she had on her bonnet and shawl,

and was borne away triumphantly by the boy, protesting, all the time, that she mustn't leave the clothes in soak.

Hilda and Cricket looked at each other, with broadly smiling faces, when they were left in possession.

"Isn't this fun?" beamed Cricket. "I've always wondered how it would seem to live in one room. Just like a baby-house, isn't it?" executing a war-dance around the solemn little Mosina, who watched the proceedings with calm interest.

"Lots of fun!" assented Hilda. "What will we do about lunch?"

"Lunch!" replied Cricket, blankly, at this practical suggestion; "I forgot about lunch. Oh, I guess there'll be something to eat in the ice-box. Why, there isn't any ice-box! Well, in the cupboard then! We'll find something and cook it! Oh, 'wot larks!' as Archie says;" and Cricket danced gaily around Mosina again.

"Let's play we live here all the time," she added, stopping, with one foot up. "I'll be Mrs. Brummagen. No, I won't; I can talk Irish better than Dutch, so I'll be Mrs. O'Flan-

agan, sure. You can be — let me see — you can be my daughter or my sister.”

“No, I won’t be either,” said Hilda with dignity. “I’ll be your mother, and wear a cap, and say ‘Arrah go bragh,’ and all those things.”

“Oh, splendid! you always do the old lady parts so well,” said Cricket, approvingly. “Let’s see what we can find for a cap. See! here’s a little white skirt of Mosina’s; guess it’s her best one. Have you any pins? We can pin the belt together and double the skirt, and here’s a beautiful cap with a ruffle and all, and *so becoming!*” adjusting the big cap, admiringly, and tucking up Hilda’s long curls.

“Now pin this funny little shawl around your shoulders. What a lovely grandma you always make!”

No wonder Hilda got on so well with Cricket, who always made things easy for her, and loved and admired her with all her unselfish little soul.

“You must pin up your skirts like a washer-woman,” said the old lady, quite delighted with her own appearance. “Now roll your sleeves up. Mosina is your baby, you know, and I’m her grandma. Now, what let’s do?”

"I wonder what Mrs. Brummagen does when she isn't washing? Do you s'pose she reads? Why, *Hilda*, there isn't a book around! Don't you s'pose she ever *reads*?" with the greatest astonishment.

"Probably she gets books from the public library," suggested *Hilda*. "Anyway, I dare say she hasn't much time to read. I shouldn't think washerwomen people would have. Perhaps she sews."

"There isn't a sign of a work-basket," said Cricket, looking around with increased astonishment. "Do you suppose *this* is all she sews with?" pointing to a spool of coarse white thread with a big needle sticking in it, and a brass thimble standing by it.

"It must be. No books and no sewing! What do you suppose she does in the evening?" exclaimed *Hilda*.

"It's very queer," said Cricket, thoughtfully.

Neither child, of course, had much more idea of the life of the very poor than they had of the habits of a kangaroo.

"But we must do something. We can't sit around all day," added Cricket briskly. "Oh, let's finish the washing!"

"Do you think that'll be fun?" asked Hilda, doubtfully. "The clothes are all wet."

"Well, Hilda, of course they are! Who ever heard of washing clothes in dry water? Come on! We needn't splash much, if we're careful. Yes, I really think we ought to do it. You know she didn't want to go and leave her clothes in the water. Perhaps they would get rancid, or mildewed, or something."

"I don't believe I want to," objected Hilda. "Ugh! think of putting your hands into that messy water! I wouldn't do it for anything!" peering into the tub disgustedly.

"It doesn't look very — appetising," said Cricket, hesitating for a word. "But see! here's the wringer on this tub. She was ready to wring them out. That's fun, anyway. We can fish up the things with this stick, and poke them in, and turn the handle and they come out dry. Then we could iron them, and they'll be all done when she comes home."

Hilda still looked doubtful about this form of amusement, and, with her ruffled cap very much to one side, she silently watched Cricket experiment with a stick.

"These clothes are the funniest! They don't

seem to have any ends; they're all muddy," she said, fishing, vainly, to bring something out of the wet mass. "Oh, I see! They're sheets," bringing one up slowly. "Shouldn't you think it was for a giant's bed? Look!" raising the sheet on the stick as far up as she could stretch, while some of its slippery folds still lay in the water. "Doesn't it make a good banner?" waving it slightly, to and fro.

"Look out, Cricket! you're spattering me! Ow! look *out*!" and Hilda dodged hastily, for the big banner overbalanced itself, and the heavy sheet fell, with a splash, outside the tub on the floor.

"Just like me!" lamented Cricket. "Oh, Hilda, pick up the baby! she'll be drowned in all this water. How can I get this thing up?" struggling with the stick to raise the unwieldy mass. This proving impossible, she picked it up in her arms, getting herself delightfully wet, and bundled it back into the tub.

"Your dress is a perfect mess," remarked Hilda, who had put the baby on the table, and was sitting on a chair beside it, with her feet tucked under her, to get out of the way of the water.

"I know it," said Cricket, cheerfully. "Can't help it. Hilda, you'll have to sit there till the water dries on the floor, for there isn't anything to wipe it up with. Anyway, I've found the end of this sheet, now, and I'm going to wring it. Isn't this fun! It's just like a hand-organ;" and Cricket turned the handle gaily.

It was fun till the heavy folds were suddenly all drawn up in a bunch in the wringer, and the machine stuck.

"Come and help me, Hilda. Tiptoe over here. Oh, you can't leave the baby. Well, I'll scatter it out a little."

"Scattering the sheet out" was effective, and Cricket turned the crank with all her might, not noticing that the long squeezed end was piling up on the floor till the last corner slipped through and fell down.

"It's all on the floor," observed Hilda from her perch. "Won't it get all dirty and wet again?"

"So it has," cried Cricket, disappointedly, picking the sheet up. "Won't it brush off?" rubbing at the dirt that had collected on it, and thereby making it ten times worse. "I should have put something there to catch it. Why do

I always think behindhand better than before-hand? How *can* people think of everything at once? Never mind; I guess it will come off when I iron it. I'll squeeze another; there's a pan for it to go into. Don't you want to come and help me? Tie Mosina to that chair over in that corner; it's dry over there."

Fishing out the ends of the sheets and turning the wringer was really great fun, and in their zeal the children quite forgot Mosina for a time. Suddenly a roar, behind them, startled them. Mosina seldom cried, but when she did it was with a ponderousness that was quite in keeping with her plump body.

CHAPTER XII.

KEEPING HOUSE.

POOR little Mosina had crawled around her chair till her length of string had given out, and then, endeavouring to crawl between the chair-legs, had fallen forward on her face, and lay sprawled out like a little turtle. The girls flew for her, and rescued her by drawing her out by the heels. She refused to be comforted, however, and continued to roar.

"I suppose she's hungry," said Cricket, at last, in a tone of despair. "Hilda, please look in the closet and see what there is for her luncheon. Mosina, *do* hush, baby! What, Hilda?"

"I said that there isn't a thing in the closet but two plates and a stone mug, and such things, — not a single thing to eat."

"Look in that little cupboard by the chimney, then. Shouldn't you think she must have *something* to eat around? What *shall* we do if there

isn't anything to eat anywhere?" in deeper despair.

"There is something here," announced Hilda, joyfully, having climbed upon a chair to look in the little chimney-closet. After a moment she got down, soberly, and proclaimed the contents of the larder to be two dried herrings, a half loaf of stale bread, some doubtful-looking butter, and a piece of very dry cheese.

The children looked at each other in dismay. Luncheon to them seemed a very serious and pressing matter, especially as Mosina was still roaring, and they knew she was hungry.

"What shall we do?" said Cricket, mournfully; "I feel as hungry as a bear, myself. "Oh, Hilda, those cookies!"

Hilda flew across the room for them, with her cap flopping.

Cricket popped a big piece of a cookie into Mosina's open mouth, and put another in her hand.

"Sit down on the floor now, and be a good baby," she said, putting her charge down. "It's dry enough. Now, Hilda, what will *we* eat? I want something more than cookies."

"I can't eat dried herring," said Hilda, decidedly, her fastidious nose going up in disgust.

"We might toast the bread, I suppose," said Cricket. "*Do* you think they don't ever have anything but dried herring? I've always wondered why mamma is always sending things to eat to poor people, and now I know."

"Can't they cook, do you suppose, or do they spend all their time washing?" wondered Hilda. "Don't you think they ever have anything to eat except what people send them?" in an awe-struck tone.

"I don't believe they do. Can you cut bread, Hilda?"

"Of *course*. Anybody can cut bread, I should think; where's the knife?"

"I can't find any regular bread-knife," said Cricket, rummaging in the cupboard. "Here's one, take this; it's awfully dull, though. While you're cutting it, I'll look for a gridiron to toast the bread on."

Hilda took the loaf and the knife confidently, but soon discovered that cutting bread is a fine art, and not by any means so easy as it looks.

"What is the matter?" she said in despair, at last. "Well, nobody could cut bread with this old knife, that's as dull as a hoe," she added, surveying the jagged, uneven wedges,

which were all she could manage. "Have you found the gridiron?"

"No. She doesn't seem to have *anything* except a teakettle and a saucepan. And here's a flat thing like what cook fries potatoes in, and here's a tin pan, and that's every single thing I can find. What do you suppose she cooks with?" asked Cricket, with increasing surprise, and with a vision before her eyes of the quantities of shining utensils that lined the kitchen closets at home.

"Toast the bread on a fork, then," said Hilda; "and can't we cook the herring in some way? I'm getting hungry enough to eat nails now."

"I suppose we might fry them. Then we could toast the cheese. I know how to do that."

"All right! we'll fry the herring in the spider," said Hilda, brightening; "I believe it will be real good. But what will Mosina eat? Ought she to have herring and toasted cheese?"

"Oh, here's some milk out on the window ledge!" cried Cricket, joyfully. "We can crumble some of this dry bread in it, and feed Mosina with it. That will be fine for her.

Bless the child! she's as good as a lamb now."

"Isn't she! I'll toast the bread, and you can set the table, Cricket."

Cricket assented; but after rummaging a while, asked Hilda where she supposed Mrs. Brummagen kept her table-cloths and napkins.

"In that cupboard drawer, probably," said Hilda, trying to make the uneven chunks of bread balance on the two-tined steel fork which she had found.

"I don't suppose we ought to look in her drawers, even if we *do* want a table-cloth. Well, I'll just peek in. No; there's nothing there but a dress of Mosina's," after a hasty "peek."

"I can't eat off that faded pink thing on the table," said Hilda, with decision. "At least, I don't believe I can," she added, more doubtfully, as the empty place in her stomach began to protest against waiting much longer for something to put in it. "Ow! there goes the bread into the fire again!"

She prodded the scorched wedge of bread with the fork, and brought it up successfully. She was growing quite expert in rescuing the pieces and blowing off the ashes.

"Cricket, this bread is simply roasted, instead of toasted."

"It does smell pretty scorchy," said Cricket, looking at it anxiously. "We can't waste it, though, for there isn't much of it. Hilda, I can't find a single thing to put on for a tablecloth, excepting a sheet. Wouldn't you rather have the pink cloth? It looks clean, anyway. Probably her white cloths are all in the wash."

"I'd eat it on the floor now," said Hilda, with a decided change of base. "The bread's done. Now for the herring."

Cricket proceeded to set the table, by putting the knives and forks and the two plates on.

"There's the table set. Looks sort of bare, though. What will you do with the herrings? Put them in the spider and let them frizzle?"

"I *think* so," said Hilda, doubtfully. "I never saw any cooked, but how else could we eat them? This fire doesn't seem very hot, Cricket. Can't we do something to it?"

Considering that the stove lids had been off for fifteen minutes during the bread-toasting, it was not surprising that the top of the fire was a mass of gray ashes.

"Put on coal," said Cricket, with the air of

the lady from Philadelphia. "But do let's cook the herring first. I'm hungry enough to eat Mosina. Oh, you fatty! aren't you happy with your cookies!"

"Oh, Cricket, here are some cold boiled potatoes," cried Hilda, as joyfully as if she had discovered a gold mine. "They were back in this corner. Can't we fry them?"

"We can," returned Cricket, promptly. "I'll fry them in the saucepan while you do the herring. I'll cut them up."

Ten minutes later, the two little cooks stood looking at each other in despair. The thin iron of the spider and saucepan heated immediately, even over the dying fire, and the potatoes and herring being put in without any lard, or fat of any kind, naturally stuck fast to the bottom of the pan, and scorched. Most unpleasant odours filled the air.

"Did you ever imagine it was so hard to cook?" sighed Cricket. "That toast was stone-cold long ago. Look at these messy things!"

"The worst of it is that we can't eat the burned parts," said Hilda, hungrily, "and there'll be so little left."

"Hilda, let's eat what we can of it right *now*," proposed Cricket. "If we cook any more we'll *never* get anything to eat."

"I could eat fried boards," said Hilda. "Yes, let's scrape out what of the potatoes isn't burned tight down, and eat it up *fast*;" and Hilda picked up the saucepan.

"Oh, Hilda, I forgot about Mosina! Aren't you the *bestest* baby! She ought to have her milk, Hilda, and I'll give her some while you're fixing luncheon on the table."

Cricket poured some of the ice-cold milk out into a bowl, and crumbled some dry bread in it.

Mosina received each mouthful with a series of solemn smacks.

"I'm ready when you are, Cricket," announced Hilda at length, surveying the somewhat scanty board with a hungry eye.

"There goes the last mouthful, Mosina," said Cricket, stuffing the spoon so hastily into Mosina's open mouth that the baby choked.

"There! never mind, baby! it didn't hurt. Now I'm ready, Hilda. Oh, just think! we've been so busy with washing and cooking that we've forgotten to play for ever so long."

"Yes, but don't let's play now, for goodness

sake! I'm too starving hungry! Sit down and begin."

Cricket and Hilda drew up their chairs to the delicious banquet. On one plate lay a curious-looking heap of what Hilda called toast. It consisted of wedges of bread an inch and a half thick on one side, and nothing at all on the other, burnt crisp on the thin edges, and scorched on the thick ones, with the dust of the ashes which it had collected in its numerous descents into the fire still sticking to it. It was perfectly cold, so that the small lumps of white butter stuck to it unmelted. Two herrings, burnt perfectly black on one side, and, of course, as hard as a piece of coal, reposed side by side on a saucer. Potatoes cut in little chunks, each very black as to one side and very white as to the other, were heaped up on another saucer. These dainties comprised all the meal.

Cricket and Hilda looked at each other a moment in silence, then Cricket said briskly:

"Isn't this fun? Let's play this is roast turkey. Shall I carve? or perhaps I'd better give you a whole turkey, seeing we are wealthy enough to have two," transferring one of the herrings to Hilda's plate. "Will you have

some scalloped oysters?" passing the potatoes. "They're done by a new recipe," she added, laughing, and attacking her herring with knife and fork. Hilda followed her example. Of course they might as well have tried to cut their stone plates.

"I'm desperate! please excuse me," cried Cricket, lifting her herring, head and tail, with her fingers, and attacking it this time with her teeth. She desisted after a vain effort.

"It's no use," she sighed. "I got off a few splinters, but they are not so *very* good. They do taste burned, and if there's one thing I hate, it's *burn*. Well, let's have some toast."

"That's burned a little, too," said Hilda, apologetically. "Perhaps we can scrape it off where it's thicker and eat the inside. Cricket, these — these oysters seem to need something. They don't taste like fried potatoes a bit."

"Of *course* they don't, for they're oysters. How could oysters taste fried potatoes? But they do taste queer, even for oysters," said Cricket. "The toast is a little burned, isn't it?" nibbling first around one scorched place and then around another. Finally she laid the piece down in despair.

"Hilda, the more I eat, the hungrier I get! I think I'll try some plain bread."

"There isn't any more. I toasted all I cut, and the rest you gave to Mosina."

The two girls sat hungrily surveying the remains of their luncheon. The herring had been abandoned as hopeless. The white top of each little chunk of potato was eaten, though every one knows that scorched potato, without either salt or butter, is not exactly appetising. The inside of the thick ends of the bread had been devoured also, but their fragments were not very satisfying to hearty little appetites.

"There are the cookies," said Hilda, suddenly.

Cricket sprang for them eagerly, at the suggestion.

"It seems sort of mean to eat the very things we brought," she said, hesitating a moment. "Oh, well, mamma will send some more things down to-morrow, when I tell her how we eat up everything Mrs. Brummagen had in the house. *Don't* these taste good? I feel as if I were at home again now," attacking a thin, crisp ginger-snap, and making way with it almost in one mouthful. In a minute there was nothing left

but the crumbs of the whole supply. Mosina sat staring wistfully at them.

"The poor dear!" said Hilda. "We've eaten up every single thing now, and she looks hungry still."

"There's a little more milk," said Cricket, getting it. "Drink this, baby. Hilda, do you suppose the burned bread would hurt her if we crumbled it into the milk for her? Perhaps she won't taste it."

Apparently Mosina did not mind it, for she eat it eagerly.

"What let's do now?" asked Hilda. "When will Mrs. Brummagen be home, do you think?"

"I don't know. Let's clear the table and iron these sheets. You know we were going to get them all done."

Flat-irons had been standing on the stove all the morning, though the girls had pushed them back in their attempts at cooking. Hilda looked resigned at Cricket's proposal, but said nothing. The two cleared the table of the remains of their banquet, and piled up the scanty array of dishes.

The sheets were still lying in damp, flattened coils in the basket, where they had put them.

Cricket found the ironing-board and put it between the table and a chair, as she had seen the laundress do at home. They unfolded a sheet and spread it out carefully, wrinkled and wet, over the board, not noticing that half of it lay on the floor behind.

Cricket, with a professional air, tested one of the irons, again imitating the laundress.

"Pretty hot," she said. It was really barely warm, for the fire was fast dying, but to her unaccustomed finger it felt hot.

"Now, I'm really Mrs. O'Flanagan. We mustn't forget to play. You take care of the baby, mother, and I'll iron. And — Hilda!" with a sudden change of tone, "Look here!" for the half-warm flat-iron on the damp sheet had left a long, black smooch. "What in the world is the matter? It keeps doing it;" for Cricket tried different places, with the result of producing a smallpox of black spots. "Did you ever?"

"Perhaps the iron is too hot, and scorches it," suggested Hilda, surveying the places critically.

"I never want to hear the word 'scorched' again," said Cricket, setting down her iron with a thump. "If it's being scorched, I shan't iron

any more. That's one thing sure ;" and Cricket hastily bundled the sheet back into the basket. Between lying on the floor and the smooches from the iron, the colour of the sheet was fast becoming African.

"It's the queerest thing! I thought that ironing was as easy as falling off a log," using her favourite comparison, which long experience had shown her was very easy indeed.

"When Sarah irons, she leaves smooth streaks everywhere the iron touches. I thought *anybody* could iron."

"*I* thought anybody could fry potatoes. Cricket, what time do you suppose it is? I think it must be nearly dinner-time. Don't you feel as if you'd been here a week?"

"Yes, a month. Don't eat that string, Mosina. You're as bad as Johnnie-goat."

"And, Cricket, just *suppose* she shouldn't get home before dark!"

"Oh, papa would send for us," said Cricket, securely. "He knows we're here. But I *do* wish Mrs. Brummagen would come home. I'm getting dreadfully tired of playing I'm poor. What do you want, Mosina?" picking up the plump baby that crawled up to her, pulling at

her dress. She sat down on the floor, taking her little charge in her arms.

“What you get fat on, Mosina, *I* don’t know, unless it’s fattening not to eat much. Mosina, I used to think it would be fun to live in one room, and get your own meals, and play house-keeping, but I’ve changed my mind. When you have to live on burnt herring — ”

“And stale bread,” burst in Hilda.

“And burned potatoes — ”

“And iron with irons that won’t iron — ”

“And have messy washing around all the time — ”

“And nothing to sew with — ”

“And nothing to cook with, and nothing to cook in it — ”

“And only wooden chairs to sit down on — ”

“And nothing to read — ”

“Oh, goodness, gracious me! I do believe I won’t ever scold again at home, and say I hate things,” said Hilda, drawing a long breath. “I never thought before how perfectly horrid it would be *never* to have anything nice. I wonder if poor people mind it.”

“Oh, dear, I hope not!” said Cricket, looking troubled. “When I’m rich, Hilda,” — with

the confidence of childhood that such a time is surely coming, — “ I’ll give everything I have to poor people, so they won’t have to work so hard, and can get books to read.”

“ But you couldn’t do that,” objected Hilda, practically, “ for you would not have anything left for yourself, and *you’d* be poor. And if nobody was poor, who’d do our cooking, and all those things ? ”

This problem was too deep for Cricket’s troubled little brain.

“ It’s a puzzle,” she sighed ; then she added, brightening, “ I’ll ask papa ; *he’ll* fix it, when he’s rich. But — I don’t see *why* — ” she pondered, struck by another thought, “ why *I* should have a nice home and such a dear family, and books, and everything I want, and Mosina have only this little room and not much to eat. Suppose *I’d* happened to be Mosina, and Mosina had been *me* ! Oh, dear ! it gets worse and worse ! ”

And Cricket, with a sigh of puzzlement over this problem of all ages, dropped a kiss on Mosina’s placid cheek.

But Mosina, herself, suddenly put an end to the consideration of all hard questions, by setting up one of her unexpected roars, as she

doubled herself up like a little jack-knife. Poor little thing! the ice-cold milk had naturally given her a severe attack of colic.

"What is the matter, baby?" cried Cricket, in dismay, cuddling Mosina in her arms, in her motherly little fashion. Mosina roared on, alternately doubling herself up and straightening herself out. Cricket and Hilda began to get thoroughly frightened.

"Cricket, she isn't dying, is she?" whispered Hilda, trembling. Not having any brothers or sisters, she was perfectly helpless with children.

"I don't know, but I guess not," said Cricket, feeling rather disturbed, herself. "There, baby! hush, dear! What shall I do for you? Mercy, Hilda, she's getting black in the face! Do go for somebody."

"Where shall I go?" asked Hilda helplessly, wringing her hands.

"Anywhere — down - stairs — in the next room. Find somebody quickly."

Hilda flew for the door, and ran plump into Mrs. Brummagen, who rushed in breathlessly. In a twinkling, the baby was in her arms. Mosina was holding her breath, and was purple in the face. Her mother promptly blew down

her throat, and thumped her on the back, and in a moment the roar began again, but rather less vehemently. The colic was evidently passing over.

Poor little Mrs. Brummagen was in a state of excitement and apology bordering on distraction, at the idea of the young ladies staying there all day long, and taking care of Mosina all that time.

“An’ you eat — vat?” she demanded, tragically. “Der was noding to eat. An’ you been here — four — five — six — hour!”

“We couldn’t find much to eat,” admitted Cricket, honestly. “We tried to cook the herrings, but they were rather tough, and we fried potatoes, only they wouldn’t fry. They seemed to burn, somehow.”

Mrs. Brummagen poured out a string of mingled German and English ejaculations, expressive of her distress.

“And, Mrs. Brummagen, we thought we’d help you a little and get your sheets all washed and ironed, but somehow it didn’t go right, and we made a dreadful mess of it. I guess you have to know how, if you wash and iron. It looks so easy, I thought any one could do it.

The sheet is dreadfully dirty — the one we did, I mean, — and its all smoochy, too. Will it come out?" and Cricket shook out the damp sheet from the basket, and anxiously displayed it.

Mrs. Brummagen was more overcome than before.

"Ach, the dear chilt!" she cried. "Ya, it vill come out, ven I vash him mit soap."

"I'm so glad," said Cricket, greatly relieved. "Of course, mamma would have given you another one, though. Now, we must go, I think. Oh, Hilda! we forgot your cap! Mrs. Brummagen, we dressed up to play keeping house, but we were so busy *doing* it, that we forgot to play much."

Mrs. Brummagen helped them on with their things, talking all the time, in her broken English; and telling them how she ought not have gone at all, and how she hardly knew what she was doing, and how she couldn't get away sooner, and how she had worried all day about their getting something to eat.

"Never mind," said Cricket. "We enjoyed it ever so much. Good-bye, Mosina. Bring her up on Saturday, when you come for the bundle, won't you? Good-bye."

It was getting well into the dusk of the short winter day, when the children arrived at home. Cricket flew into her mother's arms and kissed her as if she had been gone six weeks.

"My little girl, where *have* you been, and what have you been doing? I was just sending Eliza down for you. Somebody left word at the basement door that you were going to stay at Mrs. Brummagen's all day, but I expected you home long ago."

"Mamma, we've been playing poor, and I don't — like — it — one — bit," said Cricket, slowly, with her head on her mother's neck. "I always thought it would be rather fun to be poor, but it isn't. It's just perfectly horrid. And I'm so *hungry*, you can't think! And oh, mamma dearest! suppose — just *suppose* — that I'd been Mrs. Brummagen's little girl, instead of yours!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DIAMOND RING.

THE short days of the girls' visit flew by on wings.

"Only till to-morrow!" sighed Cricket, as they got up from the luncheon-table. "This time to-morrow you'll be gone, and we'll be left forlorn! I wish people who come here to visit would stay for always, and never go away."

"What an India-rubber house you'd have to have," said Archie, sweeping all her curls over her face with a flourish of his arm, as he passed her.

"Archie, when you get to heaven, you won't be happy unless you can muss my hair up," said Cricket, resignedly, shaking it back.

"Don't get riled, Miss Scricket," returned Archie, whirling her around. "That's only a love-pat."

"A love-pat!" said Cricket, scornfully. "I

shouldn't like to feel one of your *hate-pats*, then. Mamma, what can Hilda and I do this afternoon?"

"We girls are going to the museum again," said Eunice. "Come with us."

"No, we don't want to. You like to see such *disinteresting* things. Mummies and all that. I only like the pictures and marbles, anyway."

"We want something *very* nice," put in Hilda, "because we kept house all day yesterday, and did very hard work."

"Yes," sighed Cricket, "I've learned two things lately. I don't want to adopt a baby and have it keep me awake at night, and I don't want to be poor and not have any books to read. Mamma, what *can* we do?"

"There is one thing I want you to do," said mamma, promptly, knowing by long experience that when children are begging for something to do, nothing seems very attractive, if offered as a choice. The same thing, given as something from which there is no appeal, will be done cheerfully.

"I want you both to go and see Emily Drayton for a little while this afternoon. It is Hilda's last chance. Eunice and Edith went

yesterday. Go about three o'clock. She'll be delighted to see you, if she is at home."

"That will be jolly. I hope she'll be in. Must we make a regular call, mamma, or can we plain go and see her?"

"'Plain go and see her,'" said mamma, smiling. "Only go and put on your Sunday dress. It will be more polite to dress especially for it," added wise mamma, knowing the process of dressing would help fill up the afternoon. Papa had planned to take all the children for a long drive this afternoon, but as he was unexpectedly called away, it had to be given up, and the girls were thrown on their own resources.

At three, the two younger girls, in their Sunday best, started in high feather for their call. It was a long walk to Emily Drayton's, but the children enjoyed the crisp, cold day and the brisk exercise. Unfortunately, when they arrived at their destination, they found that Emily was out with her mother, and would not be home till late in the afternoon. Therefore there was nothing to be done but to turn around and travel home again.

"This isn't very exciting, after all," said Cricket, mournfully. "Here it's nearly four

o'clock, and most of your last afternoon is gone already. What let's do next, Hilda?"

"Oh, I don't know. I wish we'd gone to the museum with the girls. What's the matter, Cricket?"

Cricket had suddenly stopped, and was poking at a crack in the sidewalk.

"I thought I caught a glimpse of something shiny in that crack. I *did*! See, Hilda!" and Cricket extricated something, triumphantly, and held it up.

Her own amazement grew as she looked.

"*What?* Not *really*, Cricket?" cried Hilda, and the two heads clashed over the treasure-trove.

It was a ring with a fairly good-sized diamond.

Cricket whooped, there and then, in her excitement. Fortunately the street was a quiet one, and no one was near.

"A diamond ring, Hilda! A really, truly diamond! Hooray! It's as big as the one papa gave mamma on her birthday. I wonder if he'll let me wear it."

"But somebody has lost it," said Hilda, in her practical way. "You'll have to find the owner."

“Why, so I will! How silly of me. I suppose papa will advertise it. It’s just like our finding Mosina; we never thought that somebody owned her. Let’s hurry home and show papa.”

The children skipped home briskly, in the excitement of so great a discovery, and burst into Doctor Ward’s office eagerly. He had just come in for something he needed, and was on the point of going out again.

“Found what? A diamond ring?” he asked, putting down his hat, and taking the ring that Cricket put in his hand.

“H’m. Where did you find this?” he asked, turning it to the light.

Cricket told him about it. Doctor Ward, as he listened, took down a tiny vial from one of his shelves, and put a drop of its contents on the ring, watching the effect.

“It’s gold, but I’m a little uncertain about the diamond,” he said. “It’s not worth advertising, if it’s not real,” he said, putting back the bottle. “You may take it to the jeweller’s, if you like, and get his opinion.”

“*Not* a diamond?” cried the disappointed children, in a breath.

"I think it's only paste, my dear. However, you can run around to the jeweller's and find out. I must go now."

"Oh, dear me!" sighed Cricket, sorrowfully; "I thought we surely had found some excitement. Well, come on, Hilda; let's go to Spencer's and find out. If it isn't a real diamond, may we have it, papa?"

"Yes," answered Doctor Ward, absent-mindedly, turning to find something else he wanted.

At Spencer's the clerk took the ring with a smile.

"No, it isn't a diamond," he said, after giving it a careless glance. "Found it? No, it isn't worth advertising."

The two girls, who had still clung to the hope that they had found a diamond, looked immensely disappointed at this decision. They took the ring and walked slowly homeward, discussing the affair.

"If it isn't a real diamond, and if it isn't worth advertising, we might sell it for what it is worth," suggested Hilda, brilliantly, at last. "Let's go into the first jeweller's store we come to, and ask him to buy it."

"Could we?" said Cricket, doubtfully. "Is it ours enough for that?"

"Of course, goose. Your father said we might have it, didn't he? Of course we have a right to sell it and keep the money. He wouldn't care," urged Hilda.

"No, I s'pose not," returned Cricket, hesitating. "How much do you suppose we'd get for it?"

"Oh, twenty or thirty dollars, I suppose, or something like that. Rings cost a lot," answered Hilda, vaguely. "What shall we do with the money?"

"Buy a bicycle," said Cricket, promptly. "Let's each buy one. I'm crazy for a 'bika-chine,' as Kenneth says."

"So am I. What kind would you get?"

"They say the Humber is a pretty nice wheel," said Cricket, reflectively; "but I guess that they cost too much, for I heard Donald say that he wanted one but couldn't afford it. Perhaps we couldn't get one of them, but we might each get a Columbia. Archie and Will have Columbias. Do you know how much they cost?" asked Cricket, who never had any more idea of the value of things than

a cat. She had probably heard the price of a good bicycle mentioned scores of times, without its making the slightest impression upon her. Hilda, who, living alone with her mother and grandmother, never heard bicycles talked about, really did not know.

"I think the Columbias would do for us to learn on," she said, patronisingly. "You can't ride, can you?"

"Yes, I learned last fall on some of the girls' wheels at school. It's just as easy as pie. It's so funny that people make so much fuss about learning. I like a boy's wheel best, though. Wish I was on one this minute," said Cricket, with a little skip.

"Now what else shall we get with the rest of the money?" asked Hilda.

"A bicycle for Eunice," answered Cricket immediately. "Of course, mine would be part hers, but we couldn't both ride at a time, unless I hung on behind, somehow. I suppose I might get a tandem."

"Then you *never* could ride without somebody on behind," said Hilda, sensibly; "and you might not always want it. "No, I'd get a single wheel, if I were you. I think I'll get

a gold thimble with the rest of my half of the money."

"I want a lot of new books," said Cricket, characteristically. "I wish somebody would invent a book, that as fast as you read it would turn into another book that you haven't read. Then you'd always have a new book to read. Will you get anything else?"

"I want a lot of things more, but I guess I'll put the rest of my money into the savings bank. I've got three hundred dollars in the savings bank already."

"I tried to make money, once, to buy a bicycle," said Cricket, meditatively. "I had a store on the dock at Marbury for one day. Sold peanuts and lemonade. It was pretty tiresome though, and I didn't make very much. Auntie said I didn't make anything, but I never could understand it, somehow. I had twenty-one cents to put in my bank at night. I had fifty cents in the morning, but we spent it buying things to sell. Business is so queer. I should think men's heads would *burst*, finding out whether they are making money or losing it."

"It's a great deal nicer not to make money, but have somebody leave you plenty, then you

don't have to bother," said Hilda. "Here's a store; let's go in here."

The two little girls marched up to the first clerk they saw.

"We want to see if you'll buy this ring of us," said Cricket, holding it out. "We want to sell it, please, and please give us all you can for it."

The clerk stared and smiled.

"I'll have to see the old gentleman about buying the ring," he said. "You wait here a moment," and with that he went off with the ring, leaving the children looking after him hungrily, and a little uncertain whether they would see their treasure again. However, the clerk returned in a moment.

"Mr. Elton says he can't buy it unless you bring a note from your father or somebody, saying it's all right about your selling the ring, for he doesn't want to be let in for receiving stolen property."

The clerk meant this for a joke, but the horror-stricken children did not understand this kind of humour.

"I said I *found* it," said indignant Cricket at last, finding her voice.

"Oh, it's all right, I dare say," said the clerk carelessly; "you run along and get a note from somebody, and that will do."

The children walked out of the store in a state divided between indignation and bewilderment.

"I *said* I found it," repeated Cricket. "I don't see what he wants a *note* for."

"Let's go somewhere else and sell it, and *then* they'll be sorry," said Hilda, tossing her head.

"Yes, we'll go somewhere else, but first we had better go home and get a note from papa: Somebody else might ask for one," returned Cricket, learning wisdom by experience. "You see, papa said we could have it if it wasn't a real diamond, and it isn't."

They rushed up to the library and to the office, but papa was still out, and would not be back until dinner-time, the waitress told them. Then they went for mamma, but she had not returned either.

"Let's write a note ourselves," said Hilda. "Any kind of a note will do, I suppose. You see, it's really ours. Your father said so."

"Yes, I suppose it is. What shall we say? Let's make up something."

"All right! You take the ring, — now give it to me, and I'll put in the note that a friend gave it to me, and I don't like it, or something, and that we want to sell it. That will be regularly story-booky."

After much writing and giggling and rewriting, the following note was concocted :

Dear Sir: I received this ring from a friend and it's too big for me, and I send my daughter with it; and what will you give me for it?

Your friend,

J. JONES.

The "J. Jones" was actually a flight of fancy on Hilda's part. She thought it would be still more "story-booky" to sign an assumed name, and Cricket finally consented.

"It looks very well," said Cricket, surveying the effusion with much pride, when it was neatly copied in Hilda's pretty writing on mamma's best note paper. "And 'J. Jones' might be anybody, you know. Oh, Hilda! I *hope* we'll get lots of money for it!"

"We *ought* to. The gold is worth a good deal, I suppose."

"When we get the money, we might go

straight down to the bicycle place, and buy a bicycle right away, this very day," proposed Cricket, with a skip of delight, as the children went out again. "Just think of calmly walking into the house at dinner-time, with a bicycle under our arms! I mean, of course — well, you know what I mean."

"Wouldn't everybody be surprised? Where will you keep your wheel, Cricket?"

"In the basement hall, probably. What shall you name yours, Hilda?"

"*Name* it?" queried Hilda.

"Yes. I don't see why they shouldn't be named as well as a horse. Don't you think Angelica is a good name? Oh, bicycle, so nice and dear! I wish you were this minute here! Why, that's a rhyme, isn't it?"

"Here's a jeweller's," said Hilda, glancing at the window of a store they were passing. "It isn't very big, but it looks pretty nice."

A clerk with very black hair and a very big nose came forward to wait on them.

Cricket produced the ring for his inspection.

"It isn't a really-truly diamond," she said, lifting her honest eyes to his face, "but we'd like to sell it for what it's worth. And here's a

note," she added, producing it with a fluttering heart. Would he just say it was a joke, and not do anything about it? They waited breathlessly.

"Not a diamond?" said the clerk, taking it carelessly. He turned it over and looked at it closely, glanced at the children, read the note, and then said:

"No, it isn't a diamond. I should say not. We'll give you — let me see — well, I'll have to ask the boss," and he went off.

"They always have to *ask* somebody. Oh, Hilda, how much do you think they'll give?" whispered Cricket, eagerly, squeezing Hilda's hand.

"Probably thirty dollars, at *least*," answered Hilda, returning the squeeze. "Hush! here he comes."

"Boss says," began the clerk deliberately, "that the diamond isn't real, but if it's all right about the note," — the children gasped, — "that he can allow you, well, as much as seventy-five cents for the ring."

Two wide-open mouths was all the clerk could see as he glanced down. The children were too amazed to speak for a moment.

"Seventy-five cents!" faltered Cricket, at last.

"Seventy-five cents!" echoed Hilda, blankly.

And they turned and stared at each other, not knowing what to say next.

"Come, do you want it?" asked the clerk, yawning. "Don't be all night about deciding."

"Is — is that *all* it's worth?" at last ventured Cricket, her round little face really long with the disappointment.

"Really, now, that's a pretty liberal offer," said the clerk, assuming a confidential air. "Come, decide," tapping the ring indifferently on the counter.

"Wouldn't any one give me any more for it?" persisted Cricket.

"Hardly think it. Why, like as not the next person you go to might not offer you a cent more than fifty. We always do things of honour here. Liberal old bird, the boss is," with a sly wink that half frightened the children. "Highest prices paid here for second-hand jewelry. Don't you see the sign?" with a backward wave of his hand toward a placard on the wall.

Hilda and Cricket exchanged glances. Hilda

nodded, and Cricket said, with a sigh that came from her very boots :

“ Very well, we’ll take the seventy-five cents, if that’s all you can give us for it.”

“ Positively all. Fortunate you came here, or you wouldn’t have gotten that,” said the clerk, counting out three new quarters into Cricket’s hand.

“ Shine’s thrown in,” he said, facetiously, as the children soberly thanked him and walked out of the store, feeling very uncomfortable somehow.

“ What a horrid man ! ” exclaimed Cricket, as they reached the sidewalk and drew a long breath. Wasn’t he the most winkable creature you ever saw ? I suppose he thought he was funny.”

“ Greasy old thing ! ” returned Hilda, both children being glad to vent their disappointment on some convenient object. “ His fingernails were as black as ink.”

But Cricket could not stay crushed long. In a moment the smiles began to creep up to her eyes, and spill over on to her cheeks, and finally reached her mouth.

“ Oh, Hilda ! it’s *too* funny,” she cried, with her rippling laugh. “ We were going to take

our bicycles home under our arms all so grand! Shall we order them to-night?"

"*I'm* just too mad for anything," answered Hilda, whose sense of humour never equalled Cricket's. "Seventy-five cents! the *idea!* for that *beautiful* gold ring!"

"I've another idea," said Cricket, stopping short suddenly. "It isn't worth putting seventy-five cents in the bank, is it? Let's stop at that old peanut-woman's stand and get some peanuts with the money. I think we'll get a good many for seventy-five cents."

And they certainly did. The old woman stared at the munificent order, but began to count out bags with great speed, lest they should change their minds.

"Five cents a bag," she said; "seven — eight — that makes quite a many bags — nine — ten — where will I put this? — eleven — twelve — here, little miss, tuck it in here, — thirteen — can you hold it up here?"

"We have enough, I think," said Cricket, rather amazed at the quantity of peanuts you can get for seventy-five cents.

"That ain't but thirteen, honey. Here, put this 'un under your arm. Got to go fur?"

"Not very. Well, Hilda, I never had all the peanuts I wanted at one time before, I do believe. I should think these would last a year. Oh, that one's slipping off! Fix it, please. Thank you, ever so much."

"Hollo, Madame Van Twister! Are you buying out the whole establishment?" said a familiar voice behind them, and turning they saw Donald.

"I guess she's pretty glad to sell out," said Cricket, seriously. "I know, for I kept a peanut-stand once in Marbury; the one I was telling you about, Hilda. It wasn't much fun. It looks so, but it isn't."

"Buying her out from philanthropic motives?" queried Donald.

"No, we've been selling diamond rings," said Cricket, carelessly, "and we had a lot of money, so we thought we'd buy peanuts. Want a bag, Don? we have plenty."

"You're a regular circus, you kid," laughed Donald. "Where do you get your diamond rings?"

Cricket told him the whole story. Donald laughed till he had to hold on to the peanut-stand.

"J. Jones! Well, you certainly showed great originality in the name!" he said. "Sorry I can't escort you home, youngster, and carry a few dozen of those bags for you, but I'm due elsewhere," and Donald went off, still laughing.

If you want to know whether the family had enough peanuts, I will simply remark that by bedtime, that night, there were only two bags left, — and shells.

"After all, we girls didn't eat so many," said Cricket, meditatively. "Will and Archie ate ten bags. I counted. Boys are so queer! The more they eat, the more they want."

Doctor Ward was out to dinner, and did not hear the end of the story of the ring till the next day.

"Do you mean you actually sold it, you little Jews?" he said. "Then I shall be obliged to go and buy it back."

"*Papa!* why, we've spent the money!" cried Cricket, alarmed. "Besides, you said we could have it, didn't you? I thought we could do anything we liked with it," entirely forgetting that the proposition to sell it had not come from her.

"I believe I did say something about your

having it if we couldn't find an owner, or if the diamond was not real. However, I want to be sure on that point for myself. Sometimes mistakes are made. I must see about it."

"Suppose they won't sell it back," suggested Cricket, looking uncomfortable.

"Perhaps they won't, but I think I can induce them."

"But we haven't the seventy-five cents," repeated Cricket, piteously, "and we've eaten up all the peanuts, so we can't send them back and get the money."

"Where are the peanuts, which we got for the seventy-five cents, which we got for the diamond ring, which we found on the street! Now, Miss Scricket, you've got to go to jail," said Archie, cheerfully. "Where is the jail, which holds Miss Scricket, which ate the peanuts, which cost seventy-five cents, which she got for a diamond ring, what belonged to somebody else! Regular House that Jack Built."

"You can pay for the peanuts you ate, then," retorted Cricket. "That will be pretty nearly seventy-five cents."

"That identical seventy-five cents it will not be necessary to return," said Doctor Ward, pinch-

ing her cheek. "I'll supply the money, and report at luncheon."

At luncheon Doctor Ward held up the ring.

"I went, I saw, I got the ring, after an hour's hard work. I suspected it was really a diamond as soon as the old Jew opened his lips."

"It *is* a diamond?" cried every one, in chorus.

"I won't keep you in suspicion, as Cricket used to say. It *is* a diamond, though not of the first water. The old fellow first pretended he knew nothing about the matter. I had the clerks called up. He only had two. One of them —"

"Did he have a big nose?" interrupted Cricket, eagerly.

"And greasy hair and black finger-nails?" added Hilda.

"All those," said Doctor Ward. "Well, it took an hour, but finally I got it back. Then I took it to Spencer's —"

"The very place we went to," interrupted Cricket again."

"Yes, and I happened to see the very clerk. The moment I held it out he looked surprised; I told him I wanted it tested,—not merely

glanced at. He took it off, and came back, presently, looking very sheepish, and told me, as I said before, that it is a diamond, though not a very valuable one for its size."

"Why didn't he look at it more carefully at first?" asked Mrs. Ward.

"He said something about thinking it was a joke that the children were putting up, and —"

"As if we would put up a joke on a perfect stranger!" cried Cricket, indignantly.

"Of course not, pet, but he didn't know that. It was no excuse for him, though. He should have given it the proper attention. However, we have the ring safe now, after all its adventures, and we'll advertise it."

"Papa," asked Cricket, dimpling suddenly, "If nobody ever claims it, may I have it for my own, — not to sell it, I mean, — but just to wear it when I'm grown-up?"

"Can't promise. You'd probably pawn it the first time you wanted peanuts," teased Doctor Ward.

That was several years ago, but the ring, which is still in mamma's jewel-box, is now called Cricket's.

CHAPTER XIV.

SCHOOL THEATRICALS.

It seemed very lonely the next day, when Edith and Hilda had gone. The spare room was shorn of its two cots, and was restored to its usual dainty order. Will and Archie left also, as their school began the next Monday, and they went to board, in the neighbourhood of their house, till Edna was sufficiently recovered for them to be at home. She had had a very light attack of scarlet fever, fortunately, and was already improving. As soon as the boys left, Eunice and Cricket returned to their own domains. College opened and Don was off. On Tuesday, the girls' school, St. Agatha's, was in session again, so now they all settled down to the busy time that lies between Christmas and Easter.

At the close of the half-year at St. Agatha's, early in February, came the great excitement of the year. This was an exhibition, consisting of

a play, given in French by some of the older girls, and a short play in English by some of the children in the junior department. As only the girls whose scholarship was high, and deportment uniformly good, were allowed to take part in the plays, of course it was one of the chief honours of the year to be selected. The announcement of the favoured girls was eagerly awaited.

The French play was learned as class work during the fall term by all the senior girls in the French classes. The list of those chosen to give the plays was read on the first day of school after the Christmas holidays.

Much rehearsing and genuine hard work on the part of the actors, as well as of the teachers, went into this yearly exhibition, but the honour paid for all the extra hours, and the names of the girls who took the parts were preserved in the school year-book.

As Marjorie had been in the French play the year before, she could not be in it again, this year, although her marks were well up. Since Eunice and Cricket had only entered St. Agatha's this year, they never thought of the possibility of either of them being in the play. Therefore

you can imagine Eunice's blank amazement when her name was read among the others :

"Miss Eunice Ward is assigned the part of Sallie, the maid."

"*Eunice?*" said Cricket, right out loud, her eyes shining like two stars. "Oh, do you think she *can?*"

Apparently Eunice's teachers thought she could, for they had given her the very good part of a little housemaid. The "cast" were requested to wait after school, to be given their books and be instructed in their parts.

Cricket was on tiptoe with excitement when Eunice came home, trying to look unconcerned and every-day-ish. Cricket flew at her with a little shriek of delight, and squeezed her eagerly.

"Eunice! *Eunice!* think of your being given a part in a *real* play! What will you wear? Will it be hard to learn? When do you have to know it? Do they begin rehearsing soon? Could I go to the rehearsals, do you think?"

"I don't know *everything* yet, Cricket. I don't know what I'm to wear. We must know our parts perfectly in one week, and next Tuesday will be our first rehearsal. I don't know about their letting you in, but I'm afraid they

won't. I don't think they let anybody be there but Miss Raymond and Miss Emmet, and us actors," with supreme importance.

"How horrid! I'll just go somewhere and peek, then. I *must* see you."

"I'll ask Miss Emmet if you can't come, though. She knows we are always together. But, you see, if they let in one outside girl, any number may want to come in," said Eunice, wisely.

"That's so," said Cricket, with a sigh. "You tell them I'll make myself *very* small and not get in anybody's way. Where's your book?"

"Here it is. Sallie is my part, you know."

Cricket took the book and dropped down on the window-seat.

"Isn't this *delicious*? 'Curtain rising, discloses Sallie dusting.' Oh, what cunning little short sentences you have to say!" After a moment's silence: "Eunice, this won't be anything to learn. I just about know the first page already," and Cricket rattled it off.

For a week the family had to lunch and dine on the famous play. A stranger could not have told which was to take part, Eunice or Cricket, for the two knew it equally well. Indeed, in

a week's time, Cricket knew the whole play by heart, from reading the other characters, when she was hearing Eunice. The play was short, of course, only being about twenty-five minutes in length. The children declaimed it on the stairs; they spouted it in the parlour after dinner, and they interlarded their conversation with quotations from it. They talked professionally of entrances and exits, of wings and flies and scenery and cues, till their long-suffering family protested in a body.

Eunice had a private interview with Miss Emmet, the principal, regarding Cricket's presence at the rehearsals. At first Miss Emmet said positively, as Eunice had feared she would, that it was against the rules for any one to be present save herself and the teacher who drilled the girls. But Eunice's pleading face, as she urged that she and Cricket were always together in everything, and she could do it so much better if Cricket were there, because she could rehearse it with her at home, finally made Miss Emmet say, smiling :

"Well, my dear, on second thoughts, we'll admit Jean. Only please do not tell the girls that you asked for her to be present."

Eunice promised, radiantly, and flew off to Cricket with the coveted permission.

The rehearsals went on swimmingly for a time. Then, after the novelty was over, the little actors began to realise that the extra time required of them interfered, now and then, with their own plans for amusement. There began to be absences from rehearsals. The rehearsals themselves began to be a bore, for any one who has ever trained children for any exhibition knows the tiresome repetition of scenes and sentences that is necessary to ensure success in the simplest performance.

Eunice and Cricket felt it, with the others. They wanted to go skating, to go down-town with mamma, or made plans with their school-mates, only to remember, at the last minute, that there was a rehearsal that afternoon.

Eunice was very faithful, however, for her mother would not permit anything to interfere with these rehearsals. Cricket, of course, was free, but, as her father said, she would "never desert Mr. Micawber."

"No; you agreed to take a part in the play, dear," said mamma firmly, when the children begged to "cut just *once*, for the other girls did

sometimes," since something unusual had come up; "what you agreed to do, you must do, at any cost of inconvenience or disappointment to yourself. No amusements, of any kind, must prevent your being punctual at every rehearsal."

"Just sometimes, mamma," begged Eunice.

"Not even once. Your teachers are taking all this trouble for your benefit, and the least you can do is to be depended upon for your punctual presence. You know how provoking you say it is when any one is absent, and how badly the rehearsal goes on then."

"That's so; like a chicken on one leg," said Cricket, thoughtfully. "Everything hitches. But I do wish I were *in* the play. I know all Isabel Fleming's part *much* better than she does. Miss Raymond scolds her all the time."

"How did she get in if she is stupid?" asked Marjorie.

"She isn't stupid. I believe she's lazy. She just stumbles along, and it makes me so mad when she gets all mixed up in her best speeches. There's one part, with Eunice, that she spoils entirely, every time. That about the bonnet, Eunice, when you come in and find her trying it on. She's all alone before the glass first, and

she has some awfully funny things to say, and she just forgets half of them, every time."

"You do it lots better, Cricket," said Eunice. "She really does, mamma. She's practised it with me, you know, up-stairs. Let's do it now, Cricket."

And Cricket, nothing loath, jumped up, and the children went through the scene. Cricket was always such an enthusiastic little soul about everything she did, that she made herself literally the character she was acting.

"Oh, I'm just pining away to be in the play," she said, sinking down on a couch and fanning herself, amid the applause of the family.

"You look pretty healthy for one who is in that state," said Doctor Ward.

They were all in the parlour for the jolly half-hour after dinner.

"I don't show it much, I suppose," said Cricket thoughtfully, "but, really, it just pines inside all the time."

"Do you remember, mamma," put in Marjorie, "how Eunice, when she was a little thing, used to like to sit up at the piano and sing, and pretend to play her accompaniments? There was one particular song she always tried. It

had a chorus, 'Maggie, dear Maggie, I'm *pinning* for thee!' as Eunice used to say it. Cricket might sing now, 'Oh, Nancy, dear Nancy, I'm pining for *thee*!'"

"By the way, what is that ghostly song you are so fond of singing about the house, Marjorie?" asked Doctor Ward, looking up from his evening paper. "I only can make out the chorus, 'Repack, repack, repack my body to me, — to me.'"

There was a shout of laughter that nearly drowned Marjorie's astonished protest that she never sang anything so sepulchral.

"You certainly do, often," insisted Doctor Ward. "This very afternoon, not long before dinner, I heard you and two or three of your friends, in the music-room, singing, and one of the things you sang was that very song, only you sang it this way: 'Repack my body to me, — same old body.'"

There was another shout.

"Oh, papa, you *funny*!" cried Marjorie. "It isn't *body* at all. It's 'Bring back my *Bonny* to me.' It's a girl's name. The first line is, 'My Bonny lies over the ocean!'"

"That's it," said the doctor. "When you

sang, 'My *body* lies over the ocean,' I thought it was a strange thing to mislay."

Whereupon Marjorie went to the piano and insisted on playing the whole thing through, and having Eunice join her in singing it.

The next rehearsal day, Eunice and Cricket were promptly on hand. Presently all the girls were there but Isabel Fleming. Miss Raymond, the elocution teacher, came in, herself, at the last moment.

"I was unexpectedly detained. All here? Isabel Fleming isn't missing again to-day, is she? What a provoking child! This is the third time she has been absent, and she really needs more drill than any one of you, for she is so careless." Miss Raymond's black eyes snapped impatiently, and the girls were glad they were not the delinquent Isabel. "Wouldn't she catch it the next day?" the girls' silent exchange of glances said.

"Here *I* leave pressing work to come here and drill you, for your own benefit and advantage, outside of school hours," went on Miss Raymond, indignantly; "I often give up engagements that I wish to make, for ungrateful girls who are not even responsible for what they

undertake. You ought to be as ashamed to break an engagement as you would be to tell a lie."

"That is very true," said Miss Emmet quietly. "However, we won't scold the girls who *are* here, on account of those who are not. I will see Isabel to-morrow."

"They all need a talking-to, though," cried irate Miss Raymond. "They all happen to be here to-day; but I believe every one of them has missed rehearsals, with the exception of Eunice Ward."

"Mamma won't let me," said Eunice honestly.

"Your mother's a sensible woman, then," said Miss Raymond. "Now, Miss Emmet, what are we to do? It spoils the play so, to have me read Isabel's part. I can't drill them properly, and they don't do justice to their own parts."

"If you like, Miss Emmet, I will take Isabel's part," said Cricket, in her bright, unconscious way, after a telegraphic despatch to Eunice, with her eyebrows.

"But you don't know it, child, and it's the reading it at all that I object to. Not acting it, puts the others out," said Miss Raymond, pulling off her gloves.

"I mean, I can say it," explained Cricket. "I can't act it very well, of course, but perhaps it would do. I know all the part."

"Do you? Well, then, you can try it. It won't be worse, at any rate, than my reading it, and keeping my eye on the girls at the same time. Stand here, and be ready for your cue."

The speech was ungracious, for Miss Raymond was always sharp-tongued, but she patted Cricket's cheek, approvingly.

The rehearsal began. Cricket was excited, but she had her wits about her, for this work was what she loved.

"You are doing very well, child," said Miss Raymond, when she went off the stage. Cricket was so eager to fill in just right, that she never thought of herself. The little play was rehearsed twice through, and the second time Cricket did still better. Of course not as well as the girls who had been drilling for two weeks already, for she did not always get the right position on the stage, sometimes turned her back to the imaginary audience, did not leave at the right moment, every time, and never spoke loud enough.

Nevertheless, on the whole, the rehearsal was very satisfactory.

Miss Raymond said a few words to Miss Emmet while the children were resting. Miss Emmet nodded assent. When the girls were leaving, Miss Emmet detained Eunice and Cricket a moment.

"Miss Raymond and I spoke of replacing Isabel Fleming two or three days ago," she said. "I told her, the last time she was absent, that I should fill her place if she failed again. Now, Jean, I wish you would ask your mother if she has any objection to your taking the part of Nancy. You know the part already, and we can soon train you in the acting."

Cricket's eyes grew bigger and bigger. To act a part in that wonderful play!

"Will your mother permit her, do you think?" Miss Emmet asked Eunice. "Jean is rather younger than the girls are when they first take part, usually, but I think she will do."

"Yes, indeed, I think mamma will be willing," beamed Eunice.

"I come to all the rehearsals now," said Cricket, eagerly, "and I know the part perfectly, and I am sure mamma will let me."

The girls almost danced down the street.

"I'd rehearse every day in the week, and all night too," said Cricket, fervently, to mamma, when the latter warned her again that she must not let anything interfere with rehearsing. "We will not ask to shirk it once, no matter what we want to do."

"That's the only condition you can undertake it on," said mamma. "If you do it at all, you must do it thoroughly, you know."

The condition seemed a very small one to the children, as only a week remained before the eventful Friday night. The rehearsals were never more than an hour long, and generally not more than three-quarters of an hour at a time, but they came every other day.

It was Monday afternoon,—the Monday before the play. A rehearsal was appointed for three o'clock. As the girls came out into the street from school, one of their friends joined them, begging them to come and see her in the afternoon. Her mother, she said, had just come home from New York, and brought her many pretty things, as well as a great box of Huyler's candy. She wanted Eunice and Cricket to see the things and help eat the candy. Eunice, remembering

the rehearsal, said no very firmly, though her resolution was somewhat shaken when she learned that most of the candy was chocolate.

"It's so far over there that we wouldn't have time to come before rehearsal, but we might go over at four, couldn't we, Eunice?" asked Cricket, hopefully.

"Oh, how provoking! You see, I have a music lesson at four, and Mr. Schwarz is so cross if I'm a minute late; and I know there won't be anything left of that candy to offer you, after the children get hold of it. Can't you skip rehearsal, just once?"

"No, we've engaged not to," said Eunice. "It would be nice, but we mustn't, Elsie. Good-bye. Cricket, we'll be late to luncheon if we don't hurry."

It chanced that mamma had an engagement at the dentist's, and had to hurry away from the luncheon table.

"And I shan't be home till late in the afternoon, girls," she added, "for, after I leave the dentist, I have several people to see on Guild business. Be prompt with Miss Raymond, my little maids, and do well."

She was hardly out of sight when a group of

little school friends trooped up the steps. Eunice and Cricket, standing in the window, saw them coming, and flew down to the hall to meet them.

"Get your things on right away," they cried, in a chorus. "They say there is splendid skating on the lake, and we're all going out there. It will probably be gone by to-morrow, they say. Do hurry, girls!"

"Oh, jolly!" cried Cricket, flying away. Then she stopped short, and looked at Eunice.

"We can't go, girls," said Eunice, soberly. "We have rehearsal at three."

"Oh, cut for once! All the girls have cut sometime, you know. You can't be there always."

"It's such a nuisance when everybody isn't there, though. But I'm just dying for a skate," said Cricket, wistfully. "How I wish we *could* go!"

"Come, *do* cut," some one urged. "Let Miss Raymond scold. Ask your mother. She'll let you." Eunice wavered. Wouldn't mamma let her if she only knew about this? Such a *very* special occasion! They had been so very punctual and regular,—not a single time had they missed rehearsal, and they knew their parts

perfectly. Indeed, this was an extra rehearsal, appointed for the special benefit of some girl who had been absent twice. *Could* not they let it go for once? Eunice and Cricket looked at each other wistfully.

“ I believe — ” began Eunice, slowly.

“ Oh, goody ! fly up-stairs *fast*, and get your things on. It’s getting awfully late, now, to get off.”

Eunice still hesitated; then she suddenly braced herself.

“ No,” she said, backing off, with her hands behind her back, as though there were something she was forbidden to touch. Then she spoke very fast, lest her determination should waver again.

“ We can’t possibly go. We’ve promised mamma we wouldn’t shirk once, no matter what came up, and we can’t. We’re awfully sorry, but we can’t. You go on, girls. It’s getting late.”

It certainly required much resolution to say this, in the face of those glittering skates and beseeching eyes, but Eunice’s tone was so firm that the girls wasted no further coaxing, and went off with many an expression of regret.

Eunice and Cricket each drew a long breath, and looked at each other resignedly.

"Now let's get ready to go straight off before anything else happens," said Eunice, with assumed briskness.

"I don't feel as if the self-denying part of me could do that again. It's most worn out," said Cricket, mournfully, as they went up-stairs. "Think! the skating will surely be gone to-morrow! It never lasts but two or three days."

As they finally shut the front door behind them and went down the steps, Mrs. Drayton's carriage drew up before the house, and Emily's eager head popped itself forward.

"Girls! girls! where are you going? I'm so glad I'm in time to catch you. I want you to go for a drive."

"Oh, *Emily!*" cried Eunice, despairingly. "Don't say one word about anything. I'm just about crazy! *Everything* nice is happening this afternoon, when we've just *got* to go to rehearsal."

"*Must* you go?" said Emily, disappointedly. "I'd made up my mind to have a nice, long drive. I've had such a cold that I have not been out for a week, but to-day is *so* clear and

bright that mamma said I might come out and get you both, and I want you *so* much!"

"I'm *just* as much disappointed as you, Emily," sighed Eunice. "I'm tired to death of rehearsals, but we *must* go, because we promised mamma we wouldn't shirk."

"You can get some one else to go with you, Emily," said Cricket, who had waited, younger-sister fashion, for Eunice to decide the matter.

"Of course I can get plenty of people," said Emily, petulantly; "but I want *you*. Oh, *do* come! We'll stop at the school and say I wouldn't let you get out."

Emily was very used to having her own way. Eunice opened her eyes wide.

"Oh, we couldn't tell Miss Raymond *that*!" she exclaimed, in great surprise. "Please don't coax, Emily. It makes it so hard."

"There's three o'clock now," put in Cricket, as the hour struck from a neighbouring tower. "Rehearsal is at three, and we've never been late before."

Emily looked ready to cry.

"It's too bad of you. You might come if you wanted to. You'd rather go to a mean old rehearsal than come with me. I know you would."

"Emily, how silly!" cried Cricket, in despair. "As if we wouldn't rather go with you a billion times,—yes, a virgintillion. Don't you see? We've *promised*."

"Please don't be cross about it," begged Eunice. "You can get somebody and have a lovely drive, and we have to miss everything and be scolded for being late, besides. We *must* go, Cricket, or we'll have our heads taken off." And Eunice, as she spoke, sprang up on the carriage steps and kissed her little friend, coaxingly.

Emily sighed.

"Can you drive to-morrow then? I'll come early."

"If we don't have rehearsal. We'll ride with you now as far as the school, if you'll take us."

"All this trial and temptation," sighed Cricket, soberly, as they went up the school steps, "and probably being scolded for being late into the bargain."

Fortunately, however, when they reached the room, Miss Raymond herself was late, having been detained by some lesson. All the girls were already there, and soon they were at work.

"This has been a thoroughly satisfactory rehearsal," said Miss Raymond, with unusual cordiality. "Everybody is on hand, and you've all done well. I thought last Saturday you would have to rehearse every day this week, but now we will do no more till the dress-rehearsal on Thursday. You've done *splendidly*."

Praise from Miss Raymond was so rare that the girls beamed.

"*Isn't* it fortunate that we didn't cut?" said Eunice, as they went homewards. "Now we can go to-morrow with a clear conscience, and this afternoon we would have felt guilty all the time."

"Yes, and had to rehearse to-morrow, too, if we'd cut this afternoon."

The eventful Friday evening arrived in due course of time, and an enthusiastic and expectant audience crowded the schoolroom at St. Agatha's. The juniors' play was first on the programme. Eunice, in her part of maid, was very taking in her becoming costume, with its little mob-cap and jaunty apron. Cricket, as saucy Nancy, who was always listening behind doors, and getting into trouble, made a decided

hit. The other girls were all so good in their parts that it was hard to say, after all, which was best. Everything went smoothly, as it should with a well-trained, well-disciplined set of girls. The French play was beautifully given by the seniors.

The programme closed with some pretty drills and marches, for which they had been trained by their teacher of physical culture, as part of their school work. For this they had had no other preparation than their regular daily half-hour in the gymnasium.

"All this means much work on your part, Miss Emmet," Mrs. Ward said, appreciatively, to the head of the school, as people were congratulating her on her beautifully trained girls.

"And much on the girls' part, as well," answered Miss Emmet, cordially. "They learn many valuable lessons, during the time we take to prepare all this, besides their school work."

"Certainly lessons in self-denial and persistency and promptness," said Mrs. Ward, smiling. "My little girls have certainly learned the necessity of keeping engagements, no matter what more interesting things come up." And she

told Miss Emmet of the Monday before, and its accumulation of disappointments.

Miss Emmet laughed, but she looked sympathising, also.

“That’s exactly what I mean. It all goes into character-building.”

CHAPTER XV.

A DAY IN THE NURSERY.

HAVE I said that George Washington — and, of course, Martha — had accompanied the children to town when they returned home? He became as much an institution at No. 25 — Street as at Marbury. He had his apartments in the nursery, and behaved himself very haughtily to the kitchen cat, when the latter was occasionally brought up from the regions below for a visit.

George Washington had grown up to be a big, black, lustrous creature, with emerald eyes, and a bit of white fur under his chin, just like a cravat. The boys called him the bishop for his stateliness. He no longer played with Martha, nor chased her around. Unmolested, she waved proudly over his back in a stately curve.

George Washington was moderately obedient, but went his own way just often enough to assert his perfect independence. He submitted with

quiet dignity to the many performances that the children put him through, yet if they went a step too far, he would look at them so severely with his emerald eyes that the mere glance would immediately make them change their minds and pretend they meant something altogether different.

Thursday was Eliza's afternoon out. On this particular Thursday, Marjorie was left in charge of the nursery. Mamma was obliged to attend some important club meeting, and Eunice and Cricket had gone to see Emily Drayton. It was a damp, drizzling day, so that the little nursery people could not get their usual walk, and they all missed it. Zaidie, particularly, was always very dependent upon the out-of-door exercise, which her vigorous little body needed.

Marjorie, who often took charge of the nursery in Eliza's off-days, sat reading by the broad window, curled up on the window-seat, while the children played about the room. As they were always used to entertaining themselves, and were usually left, as far as possible, to their own devices, the person in charge only needed to keep a general oversight.

The twins were playing church, which was one of their favourite amusements. George

Washington was the minister. He was clad in a doll's petticoat, fastened about his neck for a surplice, and a black ribbon for a stole. He was sitting up in state behind a pile of books that served for a lectern. He knew his part perfectly, and sat as still as any bishop. By pinching his tail very slightly and carefully, he could be made to mew at the proper moments, without disturbing him much.

Helen played the mother, bringing her child, Zaidie, to church. Zaidie, of course, pretended she was a naughty girl, and talked out loud in service. Kenneth played the father, who was to take Zaidie out of church, when she grew *too* naughty. It was also his business to pinch George Washington's tail at the right time, — which was whenever Zaidie gave him orders. Just a *little* pinch, most carefully given, was all that was required, but now and then Kenneth forgot, and gave too hard a squeeze. When this happened, George Washington turned and slapped at them with his paw, with a very emphatic mew, which plainly meant, "I am quite willing to do my part towards your amusement, but if you take too many liberties, I won't play."

On one of these occasions, Zaidie suddenly stopped in the midst of a pretended roar at having her ears boxed by Helen,—very tenderly boxed,—and listened.

“I don’t think that George Washington has his usual kind of mew to-day,” she said, criticisingly. “Don’t you think he *squeaks* a little?”

Helen listened, with her head on one side.

“Pinch him again, Kenneth,” she said. “Just a little, *very* carefully. Yes, I think he *does* squeak. Do you think he is getting rusty inside? He drinks a lot of water, and it made the sewing-machine all rusty when you poured water over it.”

Here George Washington mewed again vigorously, in response to Kenneth’s invitation.

“Where does the mew come from, I wonder,” said Zaidie, thoughtfully, surveying the cat. “Is it in his mouth, or down in his throat?”

She poked her fingers in his mouth, and felt around a little. George Washington rebelled.

“Don’t scratch me, George. I aren’t hurting you a bit,” said Zaidie, reprovingly. “I want to know where your mew is, cause, if it’s getting

rusty, I'm going to oil you, same as 'Liza does the machine."

"Can *cats* be oiled?" asked Helen, doubtfully.

"Oh, yes, I 'xpect so," returned Zaidie, cheerfully. "Don't you think so? Don't you s'pose they get dried up inside sometimes? Kenneth's little squeaky lamb does. I'll get the machine-oiler."

Marjorie, curled up on the window-seat, did not heed the children's chatter. Zaidie got the little machine-can, which once, in an evil hour, Eliza had shown her how to use.

"Mew again, George Washington," ordered Zaidie, "so I can find out where it comes from. If he mews in his mouth, I can put the oil on his tongue."

A slight pinch immediately brought an answer from George Washington. Zaidie listened carefully, with her ear close at his head.

"It isn't in his mouth," she said, positively. "I think it's down his throat. How can I oil him down there? I'm afraid I'll hurt him if I stick this long end down."

"Do you s'pose those little holes in his ears are oil-holes?" asked Helen, brightening.

Zaidie immediately experimented with her tiny finger, much to George Washington's disgust.

"They go pretty far down," she said, soothing and petting him.

"Never mind, I'm not going to hurt you," she said, reassuringly. "I'm just going to put some nice, soft oil down your little oil-holes, and then you'll feel so *better*, you can't think! Your voice is all rusty. 'Liza says things won't go if they're rusty, and bimeby your voice won't go, and you'd be sorry, for you like to talk, you know."

As she spoke, Zaidie tried to poke the oil-can down his ears. George Washington jerked away.

"Here, Helen, you hold his hands, and Kenneth, you hold his feet tight. That's right. Don't let go," ordered Zaidie, getting her assistants into place. "Now, George, I won't hurt you much, and it's for your own good, you know," with a funny imitation of Eliza's tone.

Zaidie tipped the little oil-can and poked it carefully down into George Washington's unwilling ear. It tickled him, and he shook his head impatiently. The children held him rigidly,

and Zaidie let the cold oil trickle down. At the first touch of it, George Washington gave a wild yelp, and with extended claws and uprising fur, he sprang from the children's grasp, leaving such a dig in Kenneth's soft little hand that he immediately set up an unearthly howl, which brought Marjorie to the rescue.

The astonished twins stood staring at each other. Marjorie took up Kenneth in her arms, kissed the hurt place, and asked the children what they had been doing to excite George Washington to such an unusual pitch of wrath.

"We only tried to *oil* him in his little oil-holes in his ears, 'cause he squeaked so, Marjorie," explained bewildered Zaidie, "and I don't *believe* he liked it. But his voice was *drefffully* rusty, — truly it was."

"*Oil* him?" said Marjorie. "You absurd child! Animals don't need oiling."

"Yes, they *do*," insisted Zaidie. "'Liza oiled Kenneth's baa-lamb the other day. The big woolly one, up there, you know. She oiled it down in its squeaks. And she rubbed something greasy on my chest when I had the croup. Don't you remember how my breath squeaked? She said she oiled me. There!"

"Oh, you funny little things!" said Marjorie, laughing at them. "Well, don't try it again, anyway, on George Washington. He doesn't like it, you see, and you don't want to be scratched, do you? Don't cry any more, baby, dear. You're a little man, and men don't cry for a scratch like that, you know."

Marjorie set the children playing something else, and then returned to her book. She was usually a capable and efficient guardian in the nursery, eldest-daughter fashion, but this afternoon she was deep in a fascinating book that must go back to the library to-morrow. In two minutes she was absorbed in it again, to the exclusion of her little charges.

Zaidie looked around for pastures new. The children were not usually a mischievous set, but now and then, like grown people, they delighted in the unexpected.

As Helen wanted a drink, all three trooped into the nursery bathroom, which opened off the nursery. It was a pretty bathroom, with the walls covered with blue and white sanitary paper, in a pretty tile-pattern, each tile having on it a Mother-Goose figure. A big, white, fur rug lay by the white porcelain bath-tub. A

small water-cooler stood on a shelf, low enough for the children to help themselves to water.

After the little flock had been watered all around, Zaidie's quick eyes spied a bottle of vaseline on the wash-stand. It had been left there by mistake. All those things were generally put away in a little medicine closet, safely out of the children's reach. It was quite a good-sized jar, and entirely full. Zaidie took out the cork.

"I think I've got a sore spot on me somewhere," she said, feeling carefully all over her face. "I think I need some vasling on it. Do you see a sore spot on me, Helen?"

Helen looked, but could not find any place that seemed to need vaseline, even after the closest study of Zaidie's round, satin-cheeked little face.

"Put it on anywhere," she advised. "Perhaps it may get sore, and then the vasling will be already on."

Smearing vaseline all over Zaidie's face led, of course, to bedaubing Helen and Kenneth, also, with a liberal plaster of the sticky stuff.

"Doesn't it stay on *beautifully*? Let's paint the bath-room with it?" suggested Zaidie, "and

make it all pretty. We can take our tooth-brushes."

This idea was an inspiration. In a moment, arming themselves with their tooth-brushes, the children fell energetically to work. In five minutes the bathroom was a perfect bower of vaseline, and the small workers were sticky from head to foot.

Meanwhile Marjorie read on, obliviously.

"Doesn't it make the room look *beautiful*?" cried Zaidie, rapturously. "I guess 'Liza'll be pleased when she sees how pretty we've made it. And see the wood, too. It shines splendidly."

Here an unguarded flourish on Kenneth's part left a long smear of vaseline on Zaidie's short, smooth locks.

"Oh, it makes it look like mine!" exclaimed Helen, struck by the yellow gleam on Zaidie's black hair.

"Does it?" asked Zaidie, eagerly. Each little girl was smitten with a boundless admiration of the other's hair, for Helen's fluffy corn-silk mop was a great trial to her quiet little soul, and she admired Zaidie's smooth, silky black hair, with all her heart; while Zaidie, on the other hand, longed to possess Helen's golden tangle.

"Put vasling thick all over my head," she demanded, instantly, "to make it yellow. Perhaps mamma will let me wear it all the time, and then perhaps it will grow yellow like yours. I'd love that."

"Then I wish I could make mine black like yours," sighed Helen, wistfully. "Couldn't I paint it, do you suppose?"

Zaidie clapped her hands over this delightful idea.

"Then we would have changed hairs! What fun! Let's find something to paint it with, Helen. Here's 'Liza's shoe-blackening. Wouldn't that do? It makes her shoes so shiny and black."

At the sight of the black liquid, dainty Helen shrunk back a little.

"It — it wouldn't get on my face, would it?" she asked, doubtfully. "I'd like to paint my hair, but I don't want my face painted too."

"Pooh, no!" said Zaidie, drawing out the sponge. "We'll be careful. Now hold *very* still, Helen."

The little hair-dresser drew a long dab with the dripping sponge over Helen's yellow curls. Helen held her breath. Zaidie repeated the

dabs, growing more reckless, till a careless flirt of the sponge sent a liberal spatter down Helen's face, and on her white apron.

"Ow! ow!" wailed Helen, who could bear a scratch better than dirt, or a stain. She instinctively put up her hands to her face, to rub it dry, and, of course, her hands were all streaked, also.

"There, Zaidie!" she half sobbed, "you *have* painted my face, too, 'n' I'm afraid it won't come off, and I'll have to go round looking like a little nigger-girl!"

At this tragic picture, Zaidie looked frightened, and instantly applied her wee handkerchief, with dire results to the handkerchief, and no good effect on the face.

"See how her looks!" cried Kenneth, gleefully, with his hands deep in his small trousers' pockets.

Helen wailed. There were large tracts of shoe-polish on her pearly skin, and her tears chased little furrows along them. Zaidie scrubbed harder and harder with her handkerchief, but she began to grow rather frightened at the results of her painting.

"It doesn't come off *very* well," she admitted

at last, pausing in some dismay. "And I don't think I like your hair painted, anyway, Helen. It looks so *mixy*, you know."

Truly, poor little Helen was a spectacle. Her soft hair was plastered down in black patches on her forehead, and big drops of blacking, gathering on the end of each plastered lock, dropped down on her nose and cheeks. Of course it did not stick where the vaseline had been rubbed, so her face was well smeared with a mixture of greasiness and shoe-polish. Her white apron was well spattered, and her hands were, by this time, like a little blackamoor's.

"Her won't ever get white any more, I 'xpect," said Kenneth, cheerfully. "I blacked my Noah's Ark once, and it didn't ever come off. Don't you remember?"

Here the children's feelings completely overcame them, and Zaidie and Helen set up a shriek in concert that brought Marjorie to the bathroom.

"Oh, you naughty, naughty children!" she cried, in blank despair. "How shall I ever get you clean? *Shoe-polish*? Oh, horrors!"

Marjorie was really frightened lest the stain should not come out of Helen's hair.

Zaidie roared louder, and Helen sobbed, while Kenneth, suddenly overcome by sympathy, added his voice to the uproar.

"Children, how *could* you?" said Marjorie again, walking around Helen, and wondering where to get hold of her best.

"You ought to have come here and told us to don't," sobbed Zaidie. "We always don't when 'Liza tells us to. You readed and readed all the time, and you never told us to don't."

"Don't shriek so, Zaidie; I'm not deaf," said Marjorie, ignoring the other point for the present. "Don't cry so, Helen. You may get the blacking in your eyes. Stand still, and I'll try to strip your clothes off. Don't touch me, dear, or you'll stain my things."

"Whatever's the matter, Miss Marjorie?" said Eliza's voice from the doorway. "Oh, you naughty children! How have you been and gone and gotten yourselves into such a mess?"

"Oh, 'Liza!" cried Marjorie, thankfully. "I'm so glad you've come! Will this black ever come out of her hair?"

"Land knows! Did I ever see such a place in all my born days?" casting a hurried glance around at the sticky, shiny bathroom.

"She readed all the time, and she didn't ever tell us to don't," said Zaidie, pointing a reproachful finger at Marjorie, and thereby easing her own small conscience of a load.

"I jest guess you knew better'n that yourself," said 'Liza. "But how *could* you let 'em do so, Miss Marjorie?"

"I was so interested in my book," stammered conscience-stricken Marjorie. "They're usually so good, you know."

"When you take care of children, you've got to *take* care of children," returned Eliza, somewhat tartly. "'Taint *all* their badness. I dunno what their mother will say to it all. You go on, Miss Marjorie. I'll tend right up to 'em now, myself. Shoe-polish, of all things! Hope to goodness I'll get it out of that child's hair."

Eliza's deft, experienced fingers flew while she talked. Only stopping to throw off her out-of-door things, she had turned the water on in the bath-tub, had taken a cloth and wiped off the sides of the tub, which were reeking with vaseline, and had gotten hold of Helen at arm's length and stripped her clothes off. She plunged the sobbing, frightened child in the tub, and began scrubbing her vigorously.

Marjorie retreated, feeling very low in her mind, because she had so neglected her little charges in the nursery. Mrs. Ward was always strict about the thorough, conscientious performance of any duty, and would never overlook any carelessness or neglect, either from children or servants. Besides the thought of her mother's displeasure because she had not been faithful, she was really dreadfully worried lest the black stain should not come out of Helen's hair. Kenneth was only just beginning to look like himself again, after his last-summer experience with the fire. It would be such a shame if Helen had to lose her lovely hair, too.

An hour later the nursery door opened and Helen, fresh and sweet and clean, ran joyfully across to Marjorie's room.

"See! I'm all un-painted, Marjie! I'm never going to try to get black hair again," she cried. "Look! it's all out!" holding up with both hands her silken topknot, which, washed and dried, was shining again like spun gold.

"'Liza said she scrubbed me nearly out of the roots, but it's all dry now, and the vasling is all off too. 'Liza doesn't like the bathroom that way, either. She's scrubbing the vasling off that now.

I can't stay any longer, 'cause 'Liza said only stay two minutes, else I'd get into some mischief here, — but I wouldn't, truly."

Marjorie winced, but there was nothing to be said. She kissed Helen and sent her back.

CHAPTER XVI.

A GOAT EPISODE.

EUNICE sat curled up in a little bunch on the floor. Her forehead was very much knit, and her eyes were very much screwed up. She was fussing busily with a piece of red ribbon and a red Tam o'Shanter.

"What are you doing, Eunice?" asked Marjorie, looking in, in passing the door.

"I'm fixing my Tam," Eunice replied, cocking her head critically on one side, and surveying the cap as she held it up on her fist. "It doesn't fit my head very well, and I thought I'd poke it up on one side with a red ribbon bow and this red quill, like May Chester's."

"I don't think Eunice has a very *Tammy* head," struck in Cricket, from the window-seat. "Her Tam never stays on a minute; her hair's so slippery. Frousy hair like mine has *one* advantage."

Cricket's curly topknot kept her scarlet skat-

ing-cap always in the right place, but Eunice's satin-smooth hair did not afford a good foundation for her hats.

"I *can't* get it right, though," said Eunice, despairingly. She was hot and tired, and if the truth must be told, a little cross. "This ribbon won't go in the right place, somehow."

"I tried to make a rosette, but it wouldn't *rosettate*," said Cricket, putting down her book and coming forward to help look on. "Let Marjorie do it, Eunice. It looks so un-stylish the way you have it."

"No, I don't want to," said Eunice, holding on to her cap. "I want to do it myself. Marjorie doesn't know what I want."

"Yes, I do, child," said Marjorie, trying to take the ribbon. "I can do it in a moment. Let me have it."

"No, I won't," said Eunice, decidedly. "I can do it myself."

"But why won't you let me?" urged Marjorie.

"I haven't any reason. I just want to *won't*," answered Eunice, half laughing. "There, go away, Marjorie. I'm so cross that I want to bite nails."

Eunice was always an independent little body,

so Marjorie, with a pat on her head, left her struggling with the Tam. Cricket went back to her book, and Eunice worked on for ten minutes in silence.

"There!" she said at last, in a tone of triumph, holding up her cap on her hand. "It's done. That looks all right, too, doesn't it, when I put it on? You see, when it's on crooked, then it's straight. Do you see that quirk? That's very stylish," and Eunice paraded up and down before the glass.

"Isn't it quirky?" said Cricket, admiringly. "Let's go down to the library now for mamma. You know she wanted us to go before this afternoon with those books. You can wear your cap."

"Exactly what I meant to do, Miss Scricket. Get the books and come on."

It was Saturday morning. The night before had been rainy, but it had cleared off bright and very cold, leaving all the sidewalks covered with a glare of ice. Ashes and sand were liberally sprinkled, but walking was, nevertheless, a matter needing some care.

The girls went carefully down the front steps, which were somewhat slippery, although they had already been scraped.

"And there comes Johnnie-goat, prancing along as if he were on his native rocks," said Eunice, looking personally injured, as the big, white goat came sauntering abstractedly down the street, in the distance.

"I don't think he looks as goatified as usual, though," said Cricket, glancing over her shoulder. "Poor old Johnnie! I haven't seen him for ages. Let's get another picture of him, sometime, Eunice."

The camera had by no means been forgotten all winter. Many pictures had been taken, although the girls had never developed any more by themselves. They had taken many pretty views of different things. They had the twins in nearly every possible attitude, and numberless pictures of each other. Only the out-door views were much of a success, though, and they were looking forward with great anticipation to Kayuna, next summer, where they meant to photograph every stick and stone.

Eunice and Cricket walked along rather slowly, swinging hands. Each had a library book under the outside arm. Cricket was describing very vividly something she had seen on the street, the day before.

"It was the *funniest* thing! Those two ladies, all dressed to kill, came flying out of the house and down the steps, signalling to the street-car to stop; and just at the same time a cart was going by, with some long planks on it that waved way out behind. And the lady was looking so hard at the car that she never noticed the planks out behind, and as soon as the cart itself was past her, she rushed for the car, and then she struck the planks just *plump*, and went right over them, and hung there. Her head and arms were waving on one side — just *waving* — and her legs on the other, and she hung over it; and the cart man didn't know it, and just went on serenely. I felt *awfully* sorry for her, but oh, she looked so funny! just like a turtle."

"Didn't she hurt herself dreadfully?" asked Eunice, with interest.

"I don't know. Well, the car stopped, and then it went on, for I suppose the conductor saw that the lady couldn't get unhitched from the cart right off, and the cart trundled on, and the other lady ran after it, calling the man to stop, and *he* thought they were calling to the car all the time, and he waved too, and called out, 'Hi, there! lady wants yer to stop!' and

the conductor called back, 'Stop yourself, you old lummux, and let off your passenger,' and all this time the poor lady just sprawled over those planks. I was so sorry for her! but the sorrier I got, the more I laughed, but I ran after the cart, too, and called it to stop, and some small boys ran after it, and called to the man, too, and the other lady kept calling — "

But just here, without a word of warning, Cricket suddenly went down with a thump on her knees, to her intense surprise. It was not icy just there, and there was no apparent reason for Cricket's sudden humility.

"Upon my word, wasn't that queer?" she said, getting up slowly, and ruefully rubbing her knees.

Eunice had gone off into fits of laughter, after a glance behind her.

"I never saw anything funnier," she gasped. "Talk of your lady! she isn't a circumstance to you. Oh, *dear!*" and Eunice fairly doubled up.

"What *could* have been the matter? I went down as quick as a wink, and it isn't icy here, either," said bewildered Cricket. "Somehow my knees just went forward. I should think they had hinges on them. I just — "

And here she straightway went down on her knees again. Eunice leaned against a lamp-post, breathless with laughing.

"Oh, oh! don't you see? It's only — *oh*, dear! my sides ache so! it's —" and Eunice went off again into a peal of laughter.

Cricket was up by this time, more puzzled than ever.

"Do you suppose I've got anything the matter with me? I declare my knees feel cracked. Do you suppose I've got to go all the way to the library bumping along on my knees? Something seemed to *whang* into my back knees, and I — oh, *Johnnie-goat*! was it you? Eunice, was it Johnnie-goat?"

Eunice nodded weakly. She had no breath left for words. Johnnie-goat stood placidly behind Cricket, wagging his long beard socially, and making little corner-wise motions of his solemn head, as he always did when he was playfully inclined.

"He just walked right up and bunted you under the knees, and down you went. I believe he did it for a joke," gasped Eunice. "See! he doesn't seem angry a bit."

"*He* doesn't seem angry?" asked Cricket,

somewhat indignantly. "I should say he'd better not. I don't know what should have spoiled *his* temper. *I'm* the one to be angry, I should say. You wretched old Johnnie-goat! breaking my knee-pans, and making everybody laugh at me, — only there isn't anybody around."

"Yes, there are three children up in that window, across the street," said Eunice. "They're laughing as if they'd kill themselves."

"I'm glad there's something to amuse them," said Cricket, cheerfully. "Oh, Eunice! that's the very house my lady came out of yesterday! Well, I laughed at her, and those children are welcome to laugh at me. Tell me how he did it."

"Just as I told you," said Eunice, breaking out into a peal of laughter again, as they walked along. "He simply came up and bunted you under the knees, and the first thing I knew, you were on the ground, and then he did it again."

"Go home, Johnnie-goat," said Cricket, turning and shaking her finger reproachfully at the goat, who was stalking solemnly on behind, trailing his bit of rope, which, as usual, he had eaten through, in order to make his escape. "You've distinguished yourself enough for to-day."

"If we wanted to, I could call a policeman and have you arrested," added Eunice.

"I'm ashamed of you, Johnnie-goat, when we've always been such friends," went on Cricket, "and I've scratched your head between your horns lots of times, where you can't reach it yourself. Go straight home and think how sorry you are, and maybe I'll forgive you,—only you'll have to behave yourself pretty well, else you won't *stay* forgiven."

Johnnie-goat stood still and meditated a moment. Then, with the air of one who is somewhat bored by circumstances, he turned and wandered slowly back, with a meditative cock to his short tail.

"He always means mischief when he looks mildly and meekly playful like that," Cricket said, turning to watch him, and to guard against another attack in her rear.

"Cricket, where is your library book?" asked Eunice, presently.

"I don't know," said Cricket, stopping short. "Oh, that Johnnie-goat! I dropped it when he butted me, I suppose. We'll have to go back. It was just around the corner. I hope nobody has picked it up."

The children turned and quickened their steps. As they went around the corner they saw a knot of little gamins collected further down the street, an evidently excited crowd, but the book lay where Cricket had dropped it a few minutes before.

"What are these boys doing?" asked Cricket, curiously. "I wonder if anything has happened. Just hear them hoot!"

"They're up to some mischief, probably," said Eunice. "Come on, Cricket."

But Cricket lingered, with her head over her shoulder.

"They're certainly teasing something, Eunice," she said, in sudden excitement. "Some animal, — perhaps it is a cat — no, it isn't — it's Johnnie-goat! Those horrid wretches!" as an unmistakable bleat rose long and loud. "Eunice, I must stop them!"

Bang went the book on the pavement, and off darted Cricket.

"Come back, Cricket! Don't go there," called Eunice, urgently. "They might hurt you. You can't stop them. *Cricket!*"

But she called to deaf ears, for Cricket flew on, and Eunice, with the instinct never to desert

Mr. Micawber, picked up the library book, and followed in much trepidation.

Cricket dashed into the centre of the group like a small cyclone, and the little gamins fell back, right and left, in sheer amazement. Her scarlet Tam was on the back of her head, her curls were rampant with the wind, and her eyes were blazing with indignation like two stars.

Poor Johnnie-goat was indeed in trouble. A tin can dangled from his short tail, and on his horns were two similar ornaments, which bumped and clattered as he made ineffective plunges at his enemies. Besides these, stout strings were tied to each horn, so that his head could be jerked this way and that, as he jumped about, half frantic with rage and terror. One of the boys prodded him with a sharp stick.

"You shameful wretches!" rang out Cricket's clear tones. "I wish some big giant would come and torment *you*, so! How dare you!" she snatched the strings from the boy's hands, and held them firmly in her own strong little fingers.

"Where is your knife?" she said, imperiously, to the biggest boy.

He took it from his pocket and awkwardly held it out to her.

“No, open it, and cut those cans off. *You*, boy, hold his head still. *Gently*, mind. Poor Johnnie-goat!” With one hand she grasped a jerking horn, and with the other she rubbed the sensitive little place on his head. Johnnie-goat almost instantly stood quiet, with drooped head.

“A fine thing for you great boys to torment a poor, helpless animal,” Cricket said, scornfully. She flung the tin cans into the street.

“Now, be off with you, every one,” she ordered. “I’ll take Johnnie-goat home. *Go*, I say,” stamping her foot imperiously, as the boys showed signs of lingering. They had actually said not a single word, so amazed were they all at the valiant onslaught of the little maid.

Her finger still pointed unwaveringly down a neighbouring alleyway, and slowly the boys, one after another, slouched off. Any sign of indecision on the part of Cricket, and they would have refused to go. But, with her shoulders well back, and her head erect, she stood steadily pointing down the alley. She watched them round a corner, and never stirred till the last

one, with many a sheepish glance backward, had disappeared.

“Got my book, Eunice?” said Cricket, briskly. “I’m going to take Johnnie-goat home myself, and can’t we go to the library round that way? ’Tisn’t much further. Gracious! how hot I am!” and Cricket unbuttoned her long coat and threw it open. “Do you mind carrying my book for me, Eunice? I’d better hold Johnnie-goat with both hands. He seems sort of excited.”

CHAPTER XVII.

A SCRAPE.

ONE Saturday morning towards the end of March, Marjorie and Eunice and Cricket were all in mamma's room. Mrs. Ward had not come home from market yet, and Cricket was watching for her from the window, eager to ask permission for something she wanted to do.

"There's Donald!" she suddenly exclaimed. "How funny! What can he be doing here at this time?"

She ran to the hall, and hung over the banister, calling down a greeting as Donald let himself in. To her surprise, he made her no answer, but with a curt word to Jane to tell his father that he was in the study and wanted to see him as soon as he came in, he bolted into his father's private room behind the office, and shut the door.

Cricket came back and reported, with much amazement.

"I *hope* he isn't going to have mumps again," said Eunice, anxiously. "Or, perhaps it's scarlet fever. Did Donald ever have scarlet fever, Marjorie?"

"Yes, I think so. Oh, I don't suppose he's going to have any more baby diseases," said Marjorie. "There's papa now!"

Doctor Ward entered the house, and the listening girls heard the maid deliver Donald's message. He removed his coat in his leisurely way, whistling softly in a fashion he had, and went into his office for a moment. Then they heard him go into his study.

The girls waited, breathlessly, but they only heard their father's cheery:

"Well, my son?" and then the door closed.

The room was directly under them, and they could hear the faint, steady murmur of voices, but nothing more.

Presently Mrs. Ward came home, and the children flew to meet her.

"Donald here, and talking with his father? Well, my little maids, what is the mystery in that? Sick? Oh, I dare say not. Probably he only wants advice from your father about some-

thing. Whatever it is, we'll know presently, if it's any importance."

A little later, mamma was called into the conference. She did not stay very long, however, and she soon came out, leaving the door open. The girls, who were now down in the back parlour, could hear their father's voice distinctly.

"There's nothing to do but stand it, my son. I'd rather you'd be suspended for a *year* than have you clear yourself at others' expense. Loyalty is paramount in this instance, and I'll support you in the stand you've taken."

"Jove! father, you're a brick!" said Donald, gratefully. "I was jolly afraid you'd cut up rough, for it's pretty tough on you to have your son rusticated."

"A trifle tough on you, my lad," returned Doctor Ward. "But there are worse things than rusticating for a time. One is — deserving it."

"The Faculty think I do," answered Donald.

"Never mind that. Suppose those of you who can, do clear yourselves. That fastens the blame definitely on the few, where now it is distributed among twenty. And the whole

thing is not serious in itself, only the Faculty had promised to suspend the next offenders and to expel the ringleaders, if they could be found."

"This is the next time, as it happens," said Donald, gloomily. "Worse luck!"

"Yes, worse luck for you. But you are entirely right. Don't prove your alibi. Do you all stand by the others; you fellows can, as you say, stand three months' rustivating better than the half-dozen could stand expulsion."

Donald drummed his heels together. He was seated on a corner of the library table, throwing up a paper-weight, and catching it carefully.

"Oh, we'll stand by the men," he said. "See here, dad, you know I didn't mean to let on all this even to you. I only meant to tell you that your promising son is suspended. But," he added, ruefully, "somehow I forgot you weren't one of the fellows."

Doctor Ward gave his big son a crack on the shoulder that nearly sent him under the table.

"I *am* one of the fellows, old boy. I wasn't a college man for nothing; and though it's twenty-one years since I graduated, I haven't forgotten college-feeling."

"And yet,—I *did* hate to have you think I'd disgraced you," said Donald, lifting honest eyes to his father's. "I haven't done wonders, I know, but still I haven't done so very badly. And I suppose this will spoil my chances of getting on the team. Hang it all!"

"I'd like to see Professor Croft casually in a day or two, and find out the attitude of the Faculty in the matter. This morning was the sentence read?" And here the door shut again.

The girls looked at each other in horror. What dreadful thing had happened to this big, handsome Donald of theirs, of whom they were so proud? They did not understand all that had passed; and that their father plainly sympathised with Donald did not remove the stubborn fact that he was in some dreadful disgrace.

Eunice and Cricket looked at each other with bated breath. Marjorie flew to her mother.

"Did he say he was going to be — *suspended*?" faltered Eunice.

"Yes, — or rusty-coated," said Cricket, her eyes getting large and dark. "Eunice, do you suppose it hurts?"

"I don't know. Oh, Cricket, isn't it *too*

dreadful! What can he have done? But papa doesn't seem to think he's to blame, anyway," added Eunice, hopefully. "He said he'd stand by him."

"But — *suspended*, Eunice!" repeated Cricket, with a direful vision of a dangling rope. "It — it wouldn't be by the *neck*, would it? How long would they keep him there? Oh, Eunice! my heart is all jumpy."

"It couldn't be by the neck," said Eunice, positively. "Because then he'd be regularly — hung, and they only hang people for murder and those things. I'm sure of that."

"But papa said he might be rusty-coated, and he said that wasn't the worst thing that could happen. What is it, Eunice?"

"I don't know," answered Eunice, miserably. "Do you suppose it *could* be like being tarred and feathered like Floyd Ireson?" she added, almost below her breath.

"Eunice, I won't let them!" cried Cricket, springing up furiously. "Don't let them dare to touch my brother! I'd scratch them and I'd bite them and — oh, Eunice! papa *wouldn't* let them, would he?"

"Perhaps he couldn't help it. If the Presi-

dent said he had to be rusty-coated, perhaps it would *have* to be done," said Eunice, wretchedly, for she had an exalted idea of the authority of the powers that be. Eunice was a born Tory.

"I don't care if five billion presidents said so," cried Cricket, defiantly. She was a born Radical, though her sweet temper and wise training had saved her from any desire to revolt. Now all the love and loyalty of her staunch little soul surged up.

"I'd kick him and I'd bite him," repeated Cricket, "and I'd — don't you remember that I made those big boys stop teasing Johnnie-goat?"

"Yes, I know," returned Eunice, who had been very much impressed by that short scene.

"What *can* Don have done?" queried Cricket, recurring to the starting-point. "Oh, dear! I wish Faculties would be reasonable!" With this modest desire, she pounded viciously on the window-sill.

"I'll be so ashamed to have the girls know," said Eunice. "There's May Chester. Her brother is in the same class."

"Perhaps he'll be suspended, too," said

Cricket, hopefully. Misery loves company. "But — *suspended*, Eunice," with a fresh wave of dejection. "And I'm *so* afraid it will hurt."

Here the luncheon bell rang. Directly after, the study door was thrown open, and Doctor Ward and Donald came out. The father's arm was thrown across his tall son's shoulder, in a boyish fashion that the doctor often used.

"Don't tell the kids more than you can help," said Donald, hurriedly, as they came out, not aware that the children knew anything.

"Well, Lady Greasewrister and Madam Van Twister, her ladyship's sister," he called out, as he entered the dining-room, with the assumption of his usual teasing manner. Doctor Ward had stepped into his office for a moment, and the others had not yet come down. To his immense surprise and embarrassment, Eunice instantly burst out crying.

"Hallo, Waterworks! what's wrong?" he exclaimed, in dismay. Tears were rare with any of the children.

"Oh, Donald, I can't stand it! Will it hurt you?" wailed Eunice, completely overcome by the sight of the big, handsome fellow, and associating him suddenly with Cricket's image of a

dangling rope. "How long will you have to do it?"

"Do *what?*" stared Donald.

"And will you have to be rusty-coated, *too?*" burst in Cricket, very red as to her cheeks and very shiny as to her eyes. "How do they put it on? Donald, I don't care if the President himself does it, I'll bite him till he's all chewed up!"

"Hal-lo!" whistled Donald. The others not having arrived yet, the three were still alone. "What have you two kids got in your heads?"

"We heard what father said when the door was open," confessed Eunice, honestly. "We couldn't help it. He said you'd have to be suspended —"

"Or rusty-coated," put in Cricket.

"And what is it all about? and will it hurt? Oh, Don, tell us!" and Eunice threw a pair of imploring arms around his neck, while Cricket, with a gush of defensive affection, hugged one of his legs.

"*We'll* stand by you, too, Don, whatever it is, and papa will, for he said so. Don, don't go back to that nasty old college, *ever*. Go to

Princeton. It has such pretty colors. I always loved that black and orange," urged Eunice, tightening her clasp.

Donald, much touched, swept both his loyal little sisters into his muscular arms, and sat down on the window-seat.

"See here, you monkeys, I didn't mean to tell you, but I must now. There was a jolly row on Wednesday night, and one of the professors caught on, and about twenty of us were hauled up. We're suspended for the rest of the year,—that is, can't go back till college opens in the fall. We're not going to be hung, as you evidently think, if that's what you're fussing about."

"Oh, is *that* all?"

"But Don, *you* didn't do anything?"

"And if you're rusty-coated, will that hurt you?"

"We thought maybe you'd be tarred and feathered."

"And suspended! I *did* think it was some kind of hanging up."

"Why don't you tell the President you didn't do anything?"

Donald put his hands over his ears as the girls

poured out their chorus, one on each side. Just then the rest of the family arrived.

“It’s very nice for Donald to have a vacation again,” said mamma, patting her big boy’s shoulder as she passed him. The younger fry fell on him rapturously. Donald was always popular among them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN EXPEDITION.

BUT Eunice and Cricket were not altogether satisfied yet. They were very silent during luncheon, which was rather an uncomfortable meal, in spite of the older people's efforts to make it as usual.

Whatever face he put on it, to be rusticated under any circumstances was a hard thing for a proud fellow like Donald, to say nothing of his athletic aspirations.

After luncheon, Donald stepped into his father's office for another word or two, while the others went up-stairs. A few minutes after, Mrs. Ward sent Cricket back to the kitchen with a message to the cook. The office door was still open, and Donald's voice was plainly audible.

"Yes, this is terribly hard on Chester, for he has had the reputation of being a regular dare-devil, and the Faculty immediately put him down

for one of the ringleaders, whereas, you see, he wasn't in it at all. A great chum of his *was* concerned, and the Faculty have pretty well got hold of that, and there's still a chance that three or four of them may be expelled. Of course he won't peach, for the only thing that will save anybody is for us all to hold our tongues."

"And Chester was with you, you said?"

"Yes. We were especially lamb-like that night, — calling on Miss Vassar. It was so pleasant that we started to walk home, and met another fellow who rooms in town, and turned in for a smoke. We left him about twelve. We fell in with some others on the way out, who had likewise been in town, and then we suddenly got into the crowd of the others, and were all pounced upon together. Of course, sir, I can't give the names of those who were really guilty."

"By no means. And old Chester takes it hard, you say?"

"He will, when he knows of it. I'm sorry for Chester. He's a good fellow, — first-rate stuff, — but he's chuck-full of mere mischief. You see, after that other row in the winter, his

father swore that if he got into any rumpus again, he'd take him out of college, and put him in the office ; and Chester hates that like poison. And old Chester isn't like you, dad. He never was a college man, and he doesn't understand."

"I suppose not. H'm! I'm sorry for Chester. I like the lad. It would be rough on him to spoil his career."

Here Cricket suddenly awoke to the fact that she was hanging on to the banisters, listening with all her might. Much mortified, she flew on to the kitchen and delivered her message, and then darted up-stairs to share her story with Eunice.

"Eunice, *something* must be done about it. Sidney Chester is awfully in it, and Don says he didn't do a thing, either. They were both calling on Miss Gwendoline Vassar, the pretty one with red hair, — what Donald calls Tissue hair, — he's awfully struck on her, you know, — and the boys were both there that very night."

"Then they have only to tell the President so," said Eunice, much relieved.

"That's just it. They won't say so, and some others who were caught, and didn't really do anything, won't say so either, because then the

President would know just who did it, and expel those very ones."

"It's all dreadfully muddled, seems to me," sighed Eunice. "College things are always so funny."

"I think they're very unsensible, myself," said Cricket, decidedly. "I think they *ought* to tell. If the other fellows did it, let them say so, and *be* expelled. It's like Zaidie, the other day. I was in the nursery, and mamma told her not to run the sewing-machine, and Zaidie did, and mamma tied a handkerchief around her hands. And yesterday, Zaidie got at the machine again, when 'Liza wasn't there, and then she went and twisted a handkerchief around her own hands, and sat down in the corner, and wouldn't play with Helen and Kenneth for a long time. 'I just *wanted* to run that machine again,' she said, 'and now I've got to tie my hands up, 'cause I was naughty; but it was fun, anyway.'"

"That's the way those boys ought to do," said Eunice. "If they want to go and do bad things, they ought to speak up like a man and say so. Think of Don and Sidney Chester and the others being expelled, and they just calling on Miss Vassar!"

“ And Don’s just crazy to get in the team ! ” added Eunice, almost in tears again. “ Oh, Cricket, I *wish* the President could know about it. I’m sure he’d do something.”

Cricket sprang up with sparkling eyes.

“ Eunice, let’s go and tell him ! Come on, straight off, and don’t let’s tell anybody till we get back, ’cause they wouldn’t let us, I suppose. Grown people are *so* funny. And somebody *ought* to tell.”

Eunice stared helplessly at Cricket, aghast at this daring proposal. Her younger sister’s rapidity of thought and action often took her breath away.

“ Go to the President’s house ? Oh, Cricket, would you dare ? ”

“ Of course I would,” answered Cricket, boldly. “ He’s only a man. He couldn’t eat us, could he ? We’ll just tell him we’re Doctor Ward’s daughters, ’cause he knows papa. Don’t you remember that papa dined with him last week ? And we’ll just tell him that Don and Sidney Chester were calling on Miss Vassar, and that some of the others weren’t in it, too, and ask him please to give them all another chance.”

Cricket was flying out of one dress and into another all the time she talked. Eunice still stared.

"Would papa like it?" she hesitated.

"It won't make any difference after it's done; and if he doesn't like it, why, — I'll never do it again. I'll have the satisfaction of doing it once, though. Come on, you old slowpoke. I'm nearly ready."

"We don't know where he lives," objected Eunice, feebly, but getting up and going to the closet.

"*I* do. Or rather, I know the house when I see it, and anybody will tell us the way. I know what cars to take from here, and the conductors can tell us where to change. We'll be all right," finished Cricket, confidently. "Do hurry, Eunice," and Eunice hurried, feeling as if she were pursued by a small cyclone.

A little later, the two girls went quietly downstairs, and slipped out of the front door.

"Will mamma be anxious, do you think?" asked Eunice, suddenly, feeling very guilty, for the girls never thought of going out for a whole afternoon without asking permission.

"Guess not. She'll think we've gone to

Emily Drayton's. She said this morning we might go, you know. There's our car."

The two girls, with fluttering hearts and excited faces, got on the car, feeling as if they were bound for Japan or the North Pole. Cricket's buoyant, hopeful nature was serenely confident of gaining her end, while Eunice's more apprehensive temperament made her quake at the process.

"What shall we say, Cricket?" said Eunice, doubtfully.

"Just tell the President all about it," answered Cricket, easily. "I hope we can get him to let the other boys off, too. Perhaps he could just rusty-coat them for just a week or two. They ought to be willing to stand *that*; for, after all, what could you expect of *Freshmen*?" with a tolerant air and accent that amused some ladies sitting by them immensely.

"We change here. Come on," and Cricket jumped up briskly. Eunice followed more slowly. Generally, she was the leader in their joint doings, even if Cricket was, as usually happened, the originator. To-day both felt that Cricket was in command of the expedition.

They reached the house at last. Eunice

quaked more and more, but Cricket, though in a quiver of excitement, was as bold as a lion. The feeling that she was going to rescue her beloved brother from the clutches of that hawk-like Faculty, who always hovered about, lying in wait to tear unsuspecting Freshmen to bits, gave her unbounded courage. Donald was in difficulty, and some curious code of honour kept him from saving himself. Somebody else must do it, then. That was very simple; and she was the person to do it. With this small maiden, as we know, to think and to act were always in close connection, — so close that often there was some apparent confusion of precedent. But now she was sure she was right, and she valiantly went ahead.

Eunice was white with excitement. She, forming the rank and file of the attacking army, had less to sustain her courage than General Cricket had. Definite action is always easier than to await an issue. Then, also, Cricket's sublime unconsciousness that any one was particularly interested or concerned in what *she* did, saved her from the wonder, "What will people think?" which so often nips one's finest projects in the bud.

“What shall we do if the President is out?” it suddenly occurred to Eunice to wonder, as they rang the bell.

“Wait till he comes in,” answered Cricket, instantly. Having made her plans, she proposed to fight it out on that line, if it took all summer.

“Suppose he doesn’t get home till evening? We would be afraid to go home alone then.”

“He could get a carriage, and send us home,” said Cricket, magnificently.

Eunice gasped. The children seemed to have changed places. Eunice was generally the one who had the practical resources.

The maid opened the door. “Yes, he was in,” was the welcome answer to the eager question. “But it’s afraid I am that he can’t see any one this afternoon. He’s particular engaged.”

Dismay filled the children’s hearts. So near to their goal and not to be able to reach it!

“Oh, please tell him we *must* see him!” cried Cricket, imploringly. “It’s dreadfully, awfully important, and we’ve come a long way; but we’ll wait as long as he likes, till he’s quite through, but we *can’t* go away without seeing him.”

The maid hesitated. Her orders were strict, but this was plainly something out of the ordi-

nary course. "I don't know if I can tell him," she hesitated.

"We won't take but just a few minutes. We'll be very quick, and something *must* be done, and there's nobody else to do it. Please ask him to let us come in, and we'll talk very fast, and tell him all about Donald and the others, and — and I *can't* go away without seeing him!"

Cricket's earnest voice grew almost to a wail as she ended, clasping her hands entreatingly.

A door in the distance opened, and a gentleman came out.

"What's the matter, Mary?" he asked.

"I want to see the President *so* much," pleaded Cricket, twisting her fingers in her eagerness. "I know he must be awfully busy, for I suppose presidenting is very hard, and takes lots of time, but *won't* you tell him we'll be very quick? And it's *terribly* important."

The gentleman looked first amused, then interested.

"Come in, my little friends. I am the President, and I will very willingly hear what you have to say, and help you if I can."

At this announcement, Cricket, finding that

she was really in the much desired presence, drew a quick breath, feeling, for the first time, the importance of what she was doing. The two girls, holding each other's hands tightly, followed their kindly guide to the pleasant library.

"My legs wobble so, I can hardly walk," whispered Cricket to Eunice, "and there's *such* a hole in my stomach ! It feels all gone."

The gentleman placed chairs for his little guests, with the utmost courtesy of manner, and then seated himself.

"Now, what can I do for you ?" he asked, pleasantly.

Cricket gripped her fast-retreating courage with both hands, drew a long breath and plunged head foremost in her subject, as one might jump from a burning steamer into the ice-cold ocean.

"It's about Donald, and *he* can't tell, because it wouldn't be quite honourable to the others, and I found it out accidentally, and papa says he'll stand by him, though really Donald wasn't in it at all, for he and Sidney Chester were calling on Miss Gwendoline Vassar, that very night, — that pretty Miss Vassar that all the boys are so stuck on, you know, — and they stopped and smoked with another man coming home, and then they

met some other men, who hadn't being doing anything either, and then they all got mixed up with the ones who *did* do something, but I don't know what, and they were all caught together, and none of them would say a word, 'cause perhaps the right ones would be expelled if they were known, and so they're all going to be rusty-coated, or suspended, or something, and that's *dreadful*; and poor Sidney Chester, who didn't really do a thing this time, may have to leave college entirely and go into his father's office, and he hates it so, and he really isn't bad, only full of fun, and papa understands things better than old Mr. Chester does, because he was at college himself, you know, and he says he'll stand by Don, for he must be loyal to the others, only now perhaps Don can't get on the team, and he hasn't done wonders, but he hasn't done so badly in his work, and he's such a dear fellow."

Cricket drew a long breath here, and dashed on.

"And you see he didn't really do anything himself, and nobody knows we've come to you, and I guess papa would take my head off if he knew it, but I knew somebody ought to do something, and you'd feel so badly to punish

somebody who didn't do anything, and Donald didn't even mean to tell papa about it, but papa always understands, and, 'oh, dear, if he's — rusty-coated — I — can't — bear — it!'"

And here Cricket, perfectly unstrung by the nervous tension and the long strain, suddenly surprised herself, and paralysed Eunice, by bursting into convulsive sobs.

In a moment she was on the presidential knees, and her head was on the august shoulder, where she wept a perfect flood of tears into a big collegiate handkerchief which speedily replaced her small, drenched one. Eunice was so overcome by the astonishing spectacle of Cricket in tears that she sat wide-eyed with amazement, staring at her with bated breath.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RESULT.

BUT so far as any surprise or discomfiture showed itself on his face, the President seemed to be perfectly accustomed to having strange little girls invade his sanctum, break in on his sacred quiet, pour forth an incoherent tale, and end up by bursting into a flood of tears, and submitting to be taken into his arms to be comforted. He mopped away Cricket's tears most scientifically, and presently pulled still another handkerchief from some other pocket.

Soon the storm passed, and Cricket, spent with fatigue, found her curly head nestled as confidingly against the President's shoulder as if it had been her father's, with only a long-drawn, sobbing breath now and then.

"Now, my little girl, I want to know more about all this," said the kindly voice, when she was quite calm and quiet again. "You see, I don't know who my little friend is, yet, either,"

he added, smiling down into the gray eyes, in which all the usual mischief and light were nearly drowned out.

“Oh, I quite forgot,” exclaimed Cricket, apologetically, instantly sitting up. “I beg your pardon, if you please. I meant to tell you the very first thing that we are Doctor Ward’s daughters, and then I went and cried, and I’m so ashamed, for, indeed, I’m not a cry-baby, truly I’m not, and I *don’t* see what made me cry.”

The earnest little voice and wistful eyes emphasised the words.

The President hid a smile.

“I’m sure you’re not, my little friend. So you are Doctor Ward’s little daughters.” He held out his hand to Eunice, also, who immediately found herself within the kind shelter of his encircling arm.

“Doctor Ward of —— Street? Then I know your father very well indeed, and am very glad to know the children of a friend I value so much; but I wish it had been in some way pleasanter to them. But now let’s talk business first,” with a smile. “Suppose I ask you some questions and you answer them. That will be best.”

Every qualm gone now, and sure that they were in the presence of a kindly judge, Cricket, who was still spokesman, answered the few clear, direct questions that the President put. He was soon convinced of the fact that the children's own impulse was at the bottom of the expedition,—that no older person had any knowledge of it, and that the loving, loyal little hearts had carried out their undertaking, instinctively feeling that here was a case where weakness was stronger than strength.

Then came a few minutes of silence, during which the President meditated, knitting his brow, and Eunice and Cricket gazed breathlessly at him. What would he say? Donald's fate seemed hanging in the balance.

At last the President opened his lips:

"Won't you have a cup of tea with me? I usually take one about this time, if I am at home."

That was all. The girls exchanged startled glances.

The President intercepted them, and smiled down at the eager little faces so tender and reassuring a smile that they felt the load roll

off their hearts. It was all right, somehow, they instantly felt.

Cricket smiled back with such glad confidence and good comradeship that the President suddenly stooped and kissed the sweet, upturned little face.

"Yes, we'll make it all right somehow," he said, answering her unspoken thought; and then, gently putting her down, he went across the room and rang a bell. The trim maid presently responded to the order given, with a tray containing tea and fancy cakes.

The President put his little guests in low chairs, and served them himself, talking all the time as if he were one of their intimate friends. They soon chattered away fearlessly in response, telling him about their school life and the theatricals, and their mother and brother and sisters, and repeating some of the twin's funny sayings and doings, as if he had no other interests than theirs.

"Zaidie is the *funniest* child," said Cricket, confidentially. "She has the queerest ideas. The other day, 'Liza said to her, 'Don't wiggle so when I'm dressing you, because I can't get on your dress.' And Zaidie said, 'If you're

dressing me when you put on my dress, when God puts skin on people, is that called skinning them ? ” ”

“ She is young to be interested in etymology,” said the President, laughing ; “ but that is certainly logical.”

“ And the other day,” chimed in Eunice, “ mamma had been reading the first chapter of Genesis to the twins, and she asked Zaidie what God made the world out of, and Zaidie said, ‘ Out of *words*,’ and mamma asked her what she meant, and Zaidie said, ‘ He made it out of *words*, because He said, “ Let there be light and there was light,” and everything else like that, so He must have made it out of the words, ’cause there wasn’t anything else to make it out of.’ ”

“ I want to make Zaidie’s acquaintance,” said the President. “ She should have a chair in a theological seminary one of these days. Now, my little friends, it’s nearly five o’clock, entirely too late for you to go home alone. I’ll send somebody with you — or stay — I’ll go myself. Could I see your father a few minutes, do you think ? ”

“ Couldn’t you come home to dinner ? ” said

Cricket, eagerly. "You could see papa, anyway, for he's always home at half-past five. He doesn't see any office people then, either."

"Some other day I shall hope to have the pleasure of dining with you, and making acquaintance with those interesting brothers and sisters of yours," said the President, smiling his delightful smile, as he rose. "To-night, however, I'll just see your father for five minutes, as I have an engagement, later."

So, escorted by the President of the great university, homeward went two ecstatic little maids, in a perfect tumult of triumph and happiness. Cricket could hardly keep her elastic feet on the pavement.

"The hole in my stomach is all gone," she confided to Eunice's ear, "and I'm so happy that I could walk straight up the side of that house."

Mrs. Ward, who was watching from the parlour window for their arrival,—not anxiously, however, as she supposed they were safe with Emily Drayton,—was filled with amazement at the sight of their escort.

"Your little daughters have given me the great pleasure of a call," he said, courteously.

“They will perhaps explain better than I can, but I cordially hope it was a pleasure that may be soon repeated. And now, may I see your husband for five minutes or so?”

And then, when the President was safely in papa's study, the eager children poured out the story of the afternoon to mamma's astonished ears.

CHAPTER XX.

OLD MR. CHESTER.

WITH the clue that the children had given the President, the affair was more closely investigated. Donald was furiously angry at the children's exploit at first, as it certainly compromised him, but, with a little management, the source of information was kept entirely a private matter between the President, one or two of the Faculty, Doctor Ward, Donald, and Sidney Chester. Donald and some of the others whom Cricket had named were called up at a special meeting of the Faculty, but they still steadily refused to say a word at the expense of their classmates. At last, by much quiet management, the whole sentence was conditionally repealed, and private interviews were held with those now pretty well known to be the ring-leaders. They knew that they owed their escape to some private influence, and were well

warned that the next offence would give them the weight of this one also.

A few days later, old Mr. Chester came over to see Doctor Ward. He was a stern old man, who had made his own way in the world, and he wanted his son to have the education he had so sorely longed for and never had.

He had been puzzled and distressed that Sidney did not regard his college course as a sacred privilege, and had been cut to the heart by some of the lad's previous escapades. He could not comprehend that the boy was really doing good work, and was only working off his animal spirits by all sorts of what his father called "Tom-fool tricks." He scowled upon athletics, which to his mind involved only an infinite waste of time and money. That classroom lore is but half the value of college life he could not in the least comprehend. At the last of Sidney's escapades, Mr. Chester had raged furiously, and vowed that the next time the boy was caught in anything of the sort, it should end his college career, and land him in the hated office.

When the old gentleman learned of the little girls' part in the affair, he came to Doctor

Ward to express his gratitude that they had saved his lad, as he put it.

"The obstinate young donkey would tell me nothing about the matter," he growled. "He would actually have let me take him out and put him to work, without saying a word."

But for all his scolding, the old man secretly felt a thrill of pride at the loyalty — whether mistaken or not, it is not the place here to discuss — which made this possible.

"Now, as for your little girls," Mr. Chester said to Doctor Ward, "I would like to do something for them — something they will remember this by. I thought this might do, if you have no objections."

"This" was a small morocco case which he slowly drew from a side pocket. Then he produced a similar one from the other pocket, and laid them both on the desk in front of Doctor Ward. Then he touched the springs, in his deliberate way, first of one case and then of the other. The covers flew back, and on the satin linings there lay two exquisite little watches. Two little hunting-cases they were, with graceful monograms on the respective covers.

"For my little piccaninnies?" exclaimed Doctor Ward, in astonishment. "Indeed, Chester, that's too munificent altogether. Why, I haven't quite settled in my own mind yet but that the little witches ought to be sent supperless to bed for such a daring performance, without consulting anybody. The accident of its having turned out well does not by any means make up for their having taken matters into their own hands. Under some circumstances, they might have done unbounded mischief. It's too serious a matter for such small hands to meddle with the affairs of state, so to speak."

The doctor laughed as he spoke, but he had been seriously in doubt, as he said, whether to reprove or commend. He had finally compromised by a long, serious talk with his little daughters, and they had promised that, after this, they would duly consult the powers that be.

"All that is your affair," answered Mr. Chester, grimly smiling. "I can't undertake to say what discipline other people's children should have. But on my own account, and because I like pluck wherever I see it, I would

like the children to have these watches. It *was* a plucky performance, doctor, you must admit that."

"They certainly bearded the lion in his den," answered Doctor Ward, smiling also. "Yes, I think they *are* plucky little women. But, my dear Chester, some very much more trifling things will show your appreciation just as well, and make me more comfortable."

"Tut! tut! This is all in the trade, you know. I know my May was crazy for a watch like these, so I thought they would suit your girls also. And you must remember that, since I deal in these things, they are no more to me than a bottle of physic would be to you."

Doctor Ward admitted the truth of this argument, as Mr. Chester was at the head of one of the largest jeweller's stores in town, and he finally agreed to accept the watches for the children, subject to his wife's approval.

Everything being satisfactorily settled, and Mr. Chester utterly refusing to deliver the watches himself, the next morning, when Eunice and Cricket came down to the breakfast-

table, each viewed with astonishment the little morocco case at her plate.

"Why, it isn't our birthdays or anything," said Cricket, wonderingly. "Has anybody else anything?"

"This is your special celebration," said mamma, gaily. "Open and see."

The speechless children stared at what the little morocco cases held.

"What — where — why —" stammered Eunice at last, and their mother explained, while the rest of the family looked on beamingly.

"A momentum!" shrieked Cricket, snatching up the golden, gleaming thing from its pink satin pillow, and dancing around the room with a perfect whoop of delight. "Mine? ours? that dear old duck! Eunice, let's go and thank him straight off. I want to hug him and kiss him, and I always used to be so scared of him."

She was bolting for the door, but her father called her back.

"He'd be 'scared' of you if you did. Write him a nice little note after breakfast. He would much prefer that."

"Aren't they too deliciously sweet for

words?" murmured Eunice, hugging her treasure to her heart.

"See those dear little curly letters on the cover," said Cricket, rapturously examining them. "J. M. W.,—Jean Maxwell Ward. And inside,—*oh*, Eunice! do you see? Here's a date! It's the day we went to the President! Isn't this the very loveliest momentum he could have given us?"

"Memento, dear," suggested mamma.

"Yes, memento. What did I say?"

"And Donald wants to give you the gold pins to wear them with. He is going to take you down-town to-morrow afternoon,—to choose them yourselves,—if you have no previous engagements." Doctor Ward's eyes twinkled.

"Don't tease, papa! Isn't that lovely of Don. What fun to choose our own pins, Eunice! And I love to go down-town with Don, anyway. He's such a treaty fellow. He always gives us ice-cream and candy."

The pins were duly selected, after much comparing, choosing, and rejecting. Donald quietly slipped a card into Cricket's case, and when she reached home and displayed their final choice, she found Donald's inscription with it.

To
Lady Greasewrister
and
Madame Van Twister
Her
Ladyship's Sister.
This little "momentum"
For thanks have I sent 'em,
In closest resemblance to
Bright glaring brass;
For Brass it was took 'em
(Nor ever forsook 'em)
To give to the President
Some of their "sass."

CHAPTER XXI.

BREAKING UP.

THE June days had come again, and the children were beginning to look forward to the summer exodus to Kayuna. Their school closed the second week in June, and the flitting was to take place on the 11th. Eunice and Cricket were to go to Marbury in July for a two weeks' visit to their grandmother. The Somers family were to be there, as usual, and Edna had written imploring letters that the girls might be with her there for a little while. Then Edna was to be with them in Kayuna the entire month of August.

"Doesn't it seem six years since last June, when we were all flying around, and mamma was getting ready to go to Europe?" said Cricket on the last night at the house in town. "Seems to me I was such a *little* girl then."

Indeed, Cricket, as well as Eunice, had grown much older in the last year, and was more

responsible and self-reliant in every way. Both girls had grown tall, Cricket especially, for she had shot up within half an inch of Eunice this winter.

Cricket was very proud of this, and was hugely delighted when people took her to be Eunice's twin, as they quite often had of late. But her curly hair was getting to be a great grievance, as it still tumbled about her shoulders, and wouldn't grow long.

"Do you suppose my hair will *always* stay short and curly?" she asked, anxiously. She was sitting perched on her father's knee. The younger children were in bed, and the others were all in the back parlour. The furniture was in its summer dress of brown holland, the pictures had retired behind mosquito nets, and everything wore a shut-up-for-the-summer expression, except the family.

"Just think how I'll look when I'm eighty," went on Cricket, in an aggrieved tone, "going about with little flippy-floppy curls all over my head, like old Mrs. Crazy-Beecher, round on Jones Street. Don't you know how her curls always jiggle up and down, because she nods all the time like a Chinese mandolin?"

"Mandarin, dear. Yes. You might wear a wig then," suggested mamma.

"Ugh! I'd hate to wear store hair."

"Did you hear Kenneth's latest? He watched Eliza this morning putting on that funny jute braid she wears, and it seemed to strike him for the first time, so he said, 'Liza, what makes you wear *cloth* hair? Mamma doesn't.'"

"I don't want cloth hair, either," said Cricket, decidedly. "Papa, can't anything be done to straighten my curls out? Couldn't you give me some medicine for it? I'd like to put it up in plaster of Paris. Wouldn't that do it? It straightened out the little Smith boy's leg."

"We might put your mind up in plaster of Paris, to take some of the kinks out of *that*," observed Donald.

"My mind's the best I've got, and you'll please be respectful to it," said Cricket, with dignity. "You're a model of sarcasticity, I suppose you think. Anyway, I *do* wish I had 'plain hair,' as Zaidie says. Eunice just gives hers a good brushing in the morning, and braids it up all smooth and nice, and there it stays. While mine!"—a gesture of despair finished the sentence.

"I don't know what I can do for you, little Gloriana McQuirk," said her father, tumbling the obnoxious curls affectionately over her face.

"There!" exclaimed Cricket. "Nobody would ever think of throwing Eunice's braid over her face, and it wouldn't disturb it a bit if they did, and nobody minds tossing mine every which way, as if I hadn't a feeling to my name."

"Cricket's trials with her hair are like Amy March's with her nose," said Marjorie.

"Good idea," said Donald. "Braid your hair into pigtails, and put a patent clothes-pin at the end of each one, Miss Scricket," and only the fact that none were to be found in the kitchen regions, whither Cricket instantly repaired, prevented the suggestion from being carried out.

"How different things will be when we come back next fall," Mrs. Ward said, presently, when Cricket had resumed her place on her father's knee. "It will seem strange to have Marjorie gone, and the little ones in school."

For the next year was to see several changes. For one thing, Marjorie was to go to boarding-school for a year. She would soon be seventeen, and her father and mother wished her to have the training in self-reliance and independence

that a year away would give her. Marjorie did not aspire to college life, but was eager to cultivate her musical talent especially. Later, she was to have a year in Germany for that purpose.

Eunice and Cricket were to be collegians, however, and were already planning with regard to Wellesley days.

Next year, also, the twins were to be launched on their school career. They had never been even to a kindergarten, for Helen had been too delicate, and Mrs. Ward did not wish to separate the children. Now Helen seemed to be growing stronger all the time, and Doctor Ward thought that school would be quite feasible the next fall. Even Kenneth was to begin at the kindergarten, and it was no wonder that Mrs. Ward, as she said, began to feel that she really had a grown-up family.

The girls would miss Marjorie immensely next year, but, by way of compensation, Eunice thought she would enjoy the dignity of being the eldest daughter at home.

"And I think people really ought to begin to call me Miss Ward," she said, meditatively.

